PROPHETIC MINISTRY

COURSE CODE: CTTNBC – 003

By

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Prophetic Ministry
Course Code: CTTNBC - 003
Total hours: 20 hours

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COURSE OUTCOMES:

The outcome of this module is to identify the role of prophetic ministry within the Old Testament, the New Testament and how it should be operating within the Body of Christ today.

METHOD OF COURSE DELIVERY:

1. The students will examine the role of the Prophet in the Old Testament and examine the specific role of the Prophets Isaiah, Elijah and Elisha.
2. The students will examine the role of the Prophets in the New Testament and examine the specific role of Agabus.
3. The students will examine the role of the Prophetic office in line with the 5-fold ministries as defined in Ephesians 4:11-13
4. The students will use the class notes for the "School of the Prophets" and other referred textbooks as assistance in this module.

ASSESSMENT METHODS:

The students will be assessed by written projects, written assignments, in-class group discussions, practical exercises and a teacher defined project.

UNIT ONE: WHAT IS PROPHETIC MINISTRY?

Introduction:
I am sure that many students have their own views about what they believe Prophetic Ministry to be and if we did a survey among the students we might be surprised at the definitions we would receive. Therefore, to avoid confusion let us set down a definition so that we start this study all on the same page.

Definition: ***Prophetic Ministry is the gift, given by the Holy Spirit to selected people (at selected times) to allow God's word to be administered to the Body of Christ. It comes in several parts:***

1. **The Gift of Prophecy***: to edify, exhort and/or comfort the Body of Christ,*
2. **Prophetic Worship***: where under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, new prophetic music and/or lyrics are released to the Body of Christ,*
3. **Prophetic Prayer**: ***This is where intercessors, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit enter into a higher level of spiritual awareness and start to pray into spiritual areas proclaiming prophetic outcomes (which have yet to occur), as they battle in spiritual warfare against the enemy (the evil one and his band of followers).***
4. **The Office of the Prophet**: ***This is the "office", as defined in Ephesians chapter 4, a part of the 5-fold ministry, and this is where God "calls", "anoints" and "appoints" a person to this office for the rest of their lives. This person uses the gift of the Word of Wisdom: to proclaim events which are to happen to the Body of Christ, to prepare them in advance of its happening, and/or the gift of Revelation Knowledge: to expose an event in the lives of particular people so that it can be dealt with, according to the Word of the Lord.***

Let us quickly, as an introduction to this subject look at each of these examples and how they relate to the Body of Christ today.

1. The Gift of Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is identified in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, as one of the 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit. Apostle Paul opens this chapter as follows. (Living Bible Translation)

V 1. And now brothers, I want to write to you about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of you, ***for I don't want any misunderstanding about them.***

V 2. You will remember that before you became Christians you went around from one idol to another, not one of which could speak a single word.

V 3. But now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God. How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? **Here is the test**: no-one speaking by the power of the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no-one can say "Jesus is Lord," and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.

V 4. Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all.

V 5. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving.

V 6 There are many ways that God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us, who are his.

V 7 The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us, as a means of helping the entire church.

V 8 To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice, someone else may be especially good at studying and teaching, and this is his gift from the same Spirit.

V 9 He gives special faith to another and to someone else the power to heal the sick.

V 10 He gives power to others for doing miracles to some, ***and to others the power to prophecy and preach.*** He gives someone else the power to know whether evil spirits are speaking through those who claim to be giving God's message – or whether it is really the Spirit of God who is speaking. Still another person is able to speak in languages he never learned; and others, who do not know the language either, are given the power to understand what he is saying.

V 11 It is the same and only Holy Spirit who gives all these gifts and powers, deciding which one each of us should have.

Now from this series of scripture we must learn some very important points.

1. God does not want us to misunderstand what this is all about. He considers these teachings very important for the maturing of the whole Body of Christ.
2. It is God the Holy Spirit who selects which person will receive which gift at a specific point in time *"for the work of the ministry"*, to uplift the whole Body of Christ.
3. Notice in V 10 that the Holy Spirit gives the power gift of prophecy and to preach. This is the definition identified previously. This gift is to "edify", "exhort" and to "comfort the Body of Christ". It is not to bring judgement, correction or any other item. If it does it is NOT the gift of prophecy in operation.

2. Prophetic Worship

In John chapter 4, Jesus told the Samaritan woman (at the well) that the time has come for people *to* worship God *in Spirit and in Truth.* <u>This means that in the New Testament God does not accept any form of worship which is not 'in Spirit' or 'in truth'.</u>

Therefore, every Christian has to learn "how to" [Halacha] worship God Almighty 'in spirit' and 'in truth' so that the worship is acceptable to the Lord and is seen as sweet smelling incense in the heavenly throne room.

But there are some people who move into a higher level of spiritual awareness and whilst in this state the Holy Spirit will release through them new song lyrics, or new music melodies. These songs are prophetic in nature and direct our attention towards specific items, or prepare us for specific events.

Sometimes these prophetic utterances may seem like "natural worship" to the person who is involved, but the Holy Spirit's effect on the people hearing the words or music changes them and brings them also to a higher spiritual level of awareness.

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From this point onwards the Holy Spirit is then able to move across the whole Body of believers that are in that place at that time with amazing results.

Many people indicate miracles and healings, while they were worshipping. No-one laid hands upon them; no-one prayed for them, they were healed because God was able to move amongst His people in a new way, to do the will of the Father who has sent Him into our midst. ***Prophetic worship allows the Holy Spirit to be released for the "box" that people perceive Him to be in and allows the Holy Spirit free reign among those present.***

We must remember that the Holy Spirit is gentle and never forceful. We have to welcome Him into our presence so He is able to do the will of the Father amongst us.

3. Prophetic Prayer

Prophetic Prayer seems to come naturally to intercessors, because they are involved in prayer warfare much more than people who are not called to this area of responsibility, within the Body of Christ.

But that does not mean that this gift is limited to them alone. In fact this gift is available to all who truly believe in Jesus as their personal saviour, who have received the Holy Spirit, and who earnestly want to be obedient to whatever calling is placed upon their lives at any given time.

A person may start to pray about a given topic, or a leading from the Holy Spirit and the power and the intensity of these prayers start to change. It may come with travailing or intense pain felt for someone else, who maybe going through a trial and needs a person to be standing in the gap for them. In this situation, the prophetic prayers may address a situation or event, known by the Holy Spirit, but not known by the person doing the praying. The person becomes an instrument through which the Holy Spirit can move to effect proclamations about events which are happening, but with prophetic outcomes which are yet to happen.

In this situation, prophetic prayers are in effect proclaiming events which are yet to happen (as if they have already happened). Prophetic prayers are proclaiming events yet unseen as if they are.

This is a very powerful tool that can be used by every believer, if they pray and ask the Holy Spirit to impart this gift to them. Apostle Paul told us that we are to ***"earnestly seek the Gift of Prophecy"***. Once you have this gift, prophetic worship and prophetic prayer are the next steps in a person's spiritual growth. These gifts should be encouraged within the Body of Christ, not discouraged, as unfortunately happens in some denominations.

4. The Office of the Prophet

This is one of the 5-fold ministry gifts as indicated in Ephesians chapter 4, but it is not limited to the New Testament. Prophets operated all throughout the Old Testament as we will see in the future units of this subject. There is one major difference between a prophet of the Old Testament and a prophet of the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, God dwelt within a tabernacle, a confined space amongst His people. He was visible to the people in the wilderness as a cloud by day and as a fire by night.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit fell upon the person who was to become a prophet. This also happened to the 12 disciples upon whom Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit before they went out to preach and heal the sick, before He went to the cross.
Jesus told the Pharisees that He could tear down the temple and rebuild it again within three days.
They understood this on the natural level, thinking of the physical temple building which had taken many years to construct. They said that this task was impossible. Before the cross even the disciples did not understand what he was referring to.
Jesus was referring to Himself. He was telling them that His physical body was going to be torn and destroyed, but it would be resurrected again in three days, a new spiritual body, free for any imperfections, completely healed and restored, a new glorified temple.
After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to dwell within believers, to take up a habitation within our bodies, which became the New Testament temple. We are called the "living stones", and when we are in unity, we become the New Testament Temple of the Lord.

Unit One Assignment

Write an assignment in 500 words, indicating what you have learnt about the definition of Prophetic Ministry, how it is identified, and how it can be used within the Body of Christ.
This assignment will be worth 10% of the total mark for this subject.

UNIT TWO: SAMUEL THE PROPHET

Introduction

God is not limited in the way He selects and calls people to be His prophets. Careful study of the Old Testament will confirm this.
Some were called from birth (Samuel), others while they were in the fields (Amos). Some were raised in palaces (Moses) whilst others were from lowly estate (Gideon, the lowest family, of the lowest of the 12 tribes). Some just burst upon the scene, already established and recognised as prophets, but without any clear indication of how God called them into this office. (Refer to Noah and Jonah)
In the following units we will examine the following:

1. Who were they and how did God call them?
2. What were they told to do for the Lord?
3. Were they successful in carrying out their tasks?
4. Were they imprisoned, tortured or killed for obeying God's calling upon their lives?
5. What was the impact upon the nation of Israel (and the surrounding nations) as a result of their Prophetic Ministry?

1. Who were they and how did God call them?

From the account in scripture (1 Samuel chapter one) Hannah was barren and unable to give birth and so she went to the temple to pray. There Eli the high priest saw her mumbling to herself and thinking that she was drunk confronted her.

She confided in Him that she was not drunk, but was verbalising her prayers to God. He then said may the Lord give her the desires of her heart. As a result of her prayers she became pregnant and Samuel was born.

As he was a gift from God to Hannah, she dedicated him back to the Lord from the time he was weaned, to serve in the temple all his life. Samuel became the Lord's helper (1 Sam. 2:11) Because of this dedication of Samuel back to God, Hannah was able to have more children, so she did not feel the loss of Samuel as much.

When he was young Hannah made clothes for him and took them to him in the temple each year. For the rest of his time Samuel ministered before the Lord in the temple, (1 Sam. 2:18) being instructed by Eli the high priest and he continued to grow in stature. (1 Sam. 2:26)

While Samuel was still a boy (probably not even a teenager yet) God called Him into His service as a prophet. (Refer to the account in 1 Sam. chapter 3).

Even though Samuel did not recognise it was the voice of the Lord at this time, he still responded to the still small voice, thinking it was Eli who was calling him. Three times God called Samuel and three times Samuel responded and went to see Eli. Thus it was that Eli (even though he was in a rebellious state before God) recognised that it was God calling Samuel, so he instructs him to go and lie down and if he hears the voice again, to respond by saying: "Yes Lord, I am listening" (Living Bible Translation).

Then the Lord said to Samuel: "I am going to do a shocking thing in Israel. I am going to do all the dreadful things I warned Eli about. I have continually threatened him and his entire family with punishment because his sons are blaspheming God, and he doesn't stop them. So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and of his sons never be forgiven by sacrifices and offerings."

2. What were they told to do for the Lord?

The beginning of Samuel's ministry as a prophet was to bring a message of judgement upon Eli (the Chief Priest and his sons).

Imagine if you were in his position and the Lord told you to deliver a message of judgement upon your teacher, elder or pastor. What would you do?

It recounts that Samuel was afraid to deliver God's message of judgement to Eli, but Eli was more mature spiritually and so he commands Samuel to reveal all. ("Tell me everything. And may God punish you if you hide anything from me!") [Refer 1 Sam. 3:16-17]

So Samuel told him everything what the Lord had said. "It is the Lord's will" Eli replied; let him (the Lord) do what He thinks best".

As Samuel grew, the Lord was with him and people listened carefully to his advice. And all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was going to be a Prophet of the Lord.

Then the Lord began to give messages to him there at the tabernacle in Shiloh, and he (Samuel) passed them on to the people. (Refer 1 Samuel 3:18-21)

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3. Were they successful in carrying out their tasks?

In the chapter 4-7 of 1 Samuel we see that Israel was defeated in many battles, the Ark of the Covenant was captured and taken out of Israel and nothing good happened in Israel for twenty years. During this time the prophetic judgement that Samuel brought against Eli and his sons and daughter-in laws all came to pass and they all perished.

From that moment onwards Samuel was recognised as a leader in Israel. Firstly he was appointed as a judge over all of Israel, (1 Sam. 7:6) but the people were not satisfied and demanded a king they could see, like all the other nations. God said that this was wrong, but give them what they want and they will have to learn the hard way.

Samuel is told to anoint Saul to be king over Israel. Later the Lord told him to anoint David to be king in Saul's place because Saul had become rebellious and had hardened his heart before the Lord and refused to obey God's instructions to him.

4. Were they imprisoned, tortured or killed for obeying God's calling upon their lives?

In Samuel's case he was not imprisoned, tortured or killed for obeying God's calling upon his life.

5. What was the impact upon the nation of Israel (and the surrounding nations) as a result of their Prophetic Ministry?

Because of the rebellious nature of Eli the chief priest and his sons, the nation of Israel lost many battles, many soldiers were killed and the Ask of the Covenant was captured and taken out of Israel for a period of 20 years.

Because of the prayers of Samuel and David, the Lord relented and allowed the Ark of the Covenant to be returned to Israel, peace was restored to Israel and the nation prospered.

Throughout all of his life Samuel is faithful to his calling before the Lord.

[Refer Appendices 1 for more information]

Unit Two Assignment

In 500 words, write what you have learnt about Samuel the prophet, as recalled in the accounts of his life in 1 Samuel. This assignment will be 10% of the total mark for this subject.

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UNIT THREE: ELIJAH THE PROPHET

Using the headings listed below, the students will break up into small groups to research the life of Elijah the Prophet.
For students undertaking this course online, they will do private research of this topic, using the Book of 1 Kings and any other relevant resources, **including those in the Appendices.**

1. Who were they and how did God call them?
2. What were they told to do for the Lord?
3. Were they successful in carrying out their tasks?
4. Were they imprisoned, tortured or killed for obeying God's calling upon their lives?
5. What was the impact upon the nation of Israel (and the surrounding nations) as a result of their Prophetic Ministry?

Unit Three Assignment

In 500 words, write what you have learnt about Elijah the prophet, as recalled in the accounts of his life in 1 Kings commencing at chapter 17 and all other relevant resources. This assignment will be 20% of the total mark for this subject.

UNIT FOUR: ELISHA THE PROPHET

Using the headings listed below, the students will break up into small groups to research the life of Elisha the Prophet.
For students undertaking this course online, they will do private research of this topic, using the Book of 1 Kings and any other relevant resources, **including those in the Appendices**.

1. Who were they and how did God call them?
2. What were they told to do for the Lord?
3. Were they successful in carrying out their tasks?
4. Were they imprisoned, tortured or killed for obeying God's calling upon their lives?
5. What was the impact upon the nation of Israel (and the surrounding nations) as a result of their Prophetic Ministry?

Unit Four Assignment

In 500 words, write what you have learnt about Elisha the prophet, as recalled in the accounts of his life in 1 Kings commencing at chapter 19 and all other relevant resources. This assignment will be 20% of the total mark for this subject.

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UNIT FIVE: AGABUS THE PROPHET

Using the headings listed below, the students will break up into small groups to research the life of Agabus the Prophet.
For students undertaking this course online, they will do private research of this topic, using the Book of Acts and any other relevant resources.

1. Who were they and how did God call them?
2. What were they told to do for the Lord?
3. Were they successful in carrying out their tasks?
4. Were they imprisoned, tortured or killed for obeying God's calling upon their lives?
5. What was the impact upon the nation of Israel (and the surrounding nations) as a result of their Prophetic Ministry?

Unit Five Assignment

In 500 words, write what you have learnt about Agabus the prophet, as recalled in the accounts of his life in the Book of Acts and all other relevant resources. Do you identify and differences in the way this prophets operates in the New Testament compared with the Prophets that you have studied in the Old Testament? Give reasons for your answers. This assignment will be 20% of the total mark for this subject.

UNIT SIX: ARE THERE PROPHETS IN THE WORLD TODAY?

Based upon the research that you have undertaken in the previous five units and referring to the Book of Acts and the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, (chapter 4 which defines the 5-fold ministry) undertake independent research to come to your own conclusions on this question.

Unit Six Assignment

Your 500 word essay should clearly outline your views on this subject question including these subject headings.

1. Are prophets supposed to be operating in the Body of Christ today?
2. If so, what are the attributes that you would use to identify a true prophet of God today?
3. If so, what attributes would you use to identify a false prophet today?
4. If you believe there are no prophets for today, please explain your reasons, with biblical references to back up your statements.

This assignment will form 20% of the total mark for this subject.

APPENDICES:

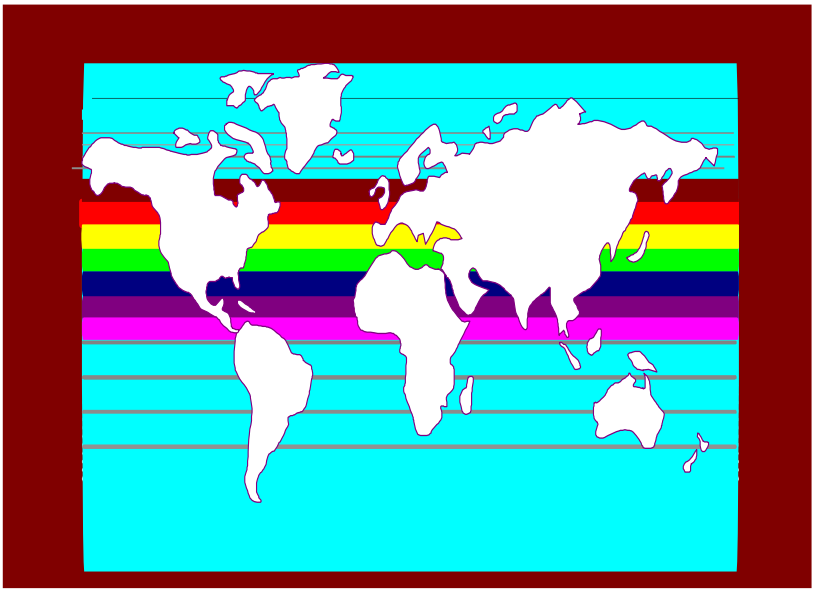
APPENDIX 1: Samuel the Prophet

But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod: Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD: And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor
God without regard to his personal image or reputation. Samuel was a spiritually minded man with unwavering absolutes. He listened to and obeyed the voice of God alone, providing a godly example for the nation of Israel to follow.

However, Samuel did not start out as a bold prophet of God, but rather a servant. Samuel was born to Elkanah and Hannah, from the tribe of Ephraim. Hannah, who was barren, pleaded with the Lord to give her a son, vowing she would give the child back to God as a lifelong servant. The Lord answered her prayer, and she named her son Samuel. As soon as the child was weaned, Hannah took him to Jerusalem to the Temple of the Lord and left him in the care of Eli the priest. Although Samuel was not of the Levites appointed by God to serve in the temple, but God honored Hannah's sacrificial offering and watched over Samuel, allowing him to minister to the Lord alongside Eli the priest.
Even as a young boy, Samuel clearly heard the voice of God. Samuel's first prophetic message was one of judgment against the two sons of Eli, Hophne and Phinehas, who would both die on the same day as a consequence of their consistently evil ways. Eli had failed to discipline his sons as God had instructed him. As a result, his family was cut off from service to the Lord. Although Samuel was afraid, he delivered the message to Eli, knowing that obedience to God was more precious than the approval of men.
This event had a tremendous spiritual impact on Samuel's life. By watching the example of Eli and his family, Samuel learned that the unchecked disobedience of leadership can lead to the downfall of an entire nation. This is evidenced by his response to the disobedience of King Saul of Israel when God instructed Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites, a feared enemy of Israel. King Saul instead spared the king of the Amalekites, and saved the best of the sheep and cattle using the excuse that they were for sacrificing to the Lord. Because he knew God desired obedience rather than sacrifice, Samuel hacked King Agag to pieces with his sword. As boy, he had already witnessed the consequences of compromise.

Samuel's days in service to the Lord taught him God's laws and regulations in worship, along with a connection to God's heart and desire to bless his people. But Samuel knew that blessing would only come with obedience. So, in his youth, Samuel resolved to follow closely the ways of God. He grew to be an honored, powerful prophet of God.
"So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD." (I Samuel 3:19-20)

APPENDIX 2: Elijah and Elisha the Prophets



SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS By

JEFFRY DAVID CAMM
MISSIONARY EVANGELIST

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife Rani, who has served as my helper and co-worker in God's service for the last eleven years. It has not been easy for her to leave her beloved Pakistan, culture and family, and go out into the unknown world to serve the Lord, firstly in the Sultanate of Oman, then Australia, in Thailand and now back in Pakistan.

In addition we have travelled to preach in 28 countries throughout the world, so she has had to be my constant travelling companion, as well as a loving and caring wife, under all sorts of difficult circumstances.

It is my desire that, in reading this book, you will feel a conviction to serve the Lord more and more in whichever area of the Lord's work He has called you to become involved.

In serving your employer work as if unto the Lord, who by His grace has provided the work for you to do. In all things remember to lift up the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whilst remaining a humble person yourself, not allowing pride or other worldly desires to cause you to move away from the divine grace of Jesus Christ.

In all things, and in all situations, be a living example, worthy of the name of Jesus Christ, as you show His pure love to all those around you, both believers and unbelievers alike.

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FOREWORD

New Light Ministries & Consulting Services Pty. Ltd are pleased to release the fifth book in the series by Rev. Jeffry David Camm called:- "SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS".

In studies of God's Holy Scriptures, I have been continually fascinated by the tasks that God Almighty has given to His Prophets throughout the centuries. As I read about these mighty men of ancient times, I try to imagine how they must have felt in their day and age, trying to follow the TEN COMMANDMENTS, given by God Almighty, in a world completely filled with sins of every conceivable nature and type.

I then think of the Scriptures written by Apostle Paul in Ephesians Chapter Four, where he outlines the **"Special Gifts"** that God Almighty has given to mankind for the building up of His church, namely **Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Evangelists, Pastors;** and I wonder why there are very few people recognised and acclaimed today as people called by God to operate in the "office" of the Prophet.

In times gone by, there were **Prophets** and **sons of prophets** and even a **school of prophets**. God Almighty used these people in a mighty way to guide and/or chide His chosen people. As Christians (or as followers of Islam) we believe that God Almighty is an unchanging God - His Word never changes. But over the centuries our attitude to the Word of God appears to have changed.

In writing this book I have tried to identify myself with the situations and circumstances of the times of that particular part of the Bible. We must remember that God's Word has not changed; it is still relevant for us here and now today and I will sometimes compare the different attitudes to God's Word by people of different centuries.

In reading this book, I pray that you will come to realise what a great and wonderful God we have, and how we can draw closer to Him, if we, as churches, and as individuals, try to follow the guidelines laid down for us in God's Holy Word.

If we are genuine in our attempts to follow His Divine Will, the Lord God has promised faithfully to help us and to provide for us. In doing so, the Lord has promised to reign down **SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS** upon us.

As God Almighty always gives good gifts to all who follow Him, I pray that you will receive **SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS** for the rest of your lives. May God Almighty bless you bountifully!

INTRODUCTION

The Bible recounts the history of the Jewish nation and gives a glimpse of some of the great men of the Old Testament, like Noah, Abraham and Moses.

There have been many stories written about these people, by authors more gifted than myself, so it is unnecessary for me to undertake any further writings about them, except to mention them in passing if I think it is relevant to this story.

These great men were the leaders of God's chosen people, and they strove to know and understand what God Almighty wanted each man to do with his life, on a day-to-day basis.

Each of these men had special gifts which God used to guide and protect His people in each generation, and each of them had one thing in common - **they all loved the Lord God Almighty above all else, and were prepared to listen to His voice and obey it without question**.

Noah was commanded to build the ark - a large boat, as big as an ocean-going liner, to protect his family (the righteous ones) when God Almighty brought down the flood upon the earth. Noah and his family had to work for forty years to build this boat, and during that time his faith never faltered, despite ridicule from the local population.

God Almighty called Abraham out from among his own people and promised him a special land. He also said that Abraham would be the father of many nations but, alas, it seemed Abraham's wife could not have a child. Despite this an Angel of the Lord told him his wife *would* bear a child. The promise of a child for Abraham was given twenty five years before it came to pass.

Moses was selected as a baby to lead his people out of Egypt. He was forty years of age when he was driven out of the land of Egypt by the Pharaoh, to live in the desert of Sinai. It was a further forty years of shaping and moulding before God Almighty called Moses to do His will, to go back into Egypt and lead the Israelites out, to later become a mighty nation.

In all of the Bible stories, from Genesis to Revelations, there is a stream of people chosen by God Almighty to be **"God's mouthpiece"**, people who receive knowledge supernaturally, of events which will take place in the future. These people were called **Prophets.**

In Ephesians 4:11-13 it says:- "It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

It is obvious that there is not 100% complete unity in the Body of Christ today, nor has every person in the church become mature enough to claim they have the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Therefore it is essential in the world today, that we have people who are operating in the church body fulfilling the offices of the five-fold ministries, as identified in the Scriptures above (especially in the office of the Prophet). These people are God's messengers, to prepare us for things to come **in the future**.

To get a better understanding of what type of people the prophets were, and what type of reaction, or credibility, they received from the people of their various times, I will look at a few prophets of old, to try better to understand these great men of God.

We will attempt to walk with them, as they go about their daily lives, and see how they achieved their successes. Then we will have a better understanding of why it is so important for prophets of God (not false prophets) to be in the world today.

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ELIJAH [ELIAS] - THE PROPHET

1. His early Life.

Unlike Samuel the Prophet, we know very little about the early life of Elijah, who was born in Tishbe in the province of Naphtali and later lived in Gilead.

Samuel, we know, was offered to God Almighty as a servant, even before he was conceived in the womb of Hannah, his mother. We know that Samuel was brought up under the tutelage of Eli, the high priest, and filled with the Holy Spirit of God from a very early age.

On the other hand, Elijah appears on the scene in the Bible fully grown and coming straight into the palace of King Ahab, to deliver a message of judgment against the nation of Israel.

Because of this we have to make some assumptions about his early life and background from what we can derive from the Scriptures and other reference books of this particular part of biblical history.

Due to the internal fighting within the tribes of Israel, the nation had become divided into two distinct kingdoms, namely the kingdom of Israel, and the kingdom of Judah. This occurred about 975 BC, or about 980-1000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Some forty years earlier, the Jewish nation had all been united under the reign of King Solomon and they had come together, as a mighty nation, to dedicate the temple to God Almighty. But now, in a short space of forty years, (the biblical term for one generation) they had turned away from following their God, to follow after many other false gods, raising up idols, which was forbidden under God's Laws given to Moses - the "TEN COMMANDMENTS".

In Samaria, King Omri had built a city and dwelt there, doing much evil in the sight of the Lord and causing God Almighty's anger to be kindled against the nation of Israel, (they had sinned greatly in the sight of the Lord).

Because of this great sin, God Almighty only allowed King Omri to reign for 12 years over Israel, before King Ahab, his son, took over the throne in his place.

Unfortunately King Ahab followed in the footsteps of his father and continued to do much evil, so much so that it is recorded that his evil deeds were greater than any of the kings before him.

Firstly he took a "non-Jewess" to be his bride, called Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonites. The king and queen of the Sidonites worshipped "Baal". To please his new queen, King Ahab had constructed an altar to worship "Baal" in the city of Samaria, in full sight of all the people of Israel.

It was a terrible thing that the king and queen were doing, causing the nation to turn away from "their God" in this way.

This is the type of situation that Elijah was born into, growing up in a nation fast turning away from their chosen God, a God they had sworn to serve when they entered into the Promised Land, under the leadership of Joshua, some three hundred and eighty years before.

Luckily, not all of the people turned away from their God. Many did not follow the wicked ways of the King, but continued to follow the teachings of Abraham and Moses, the writings of the Judges, the books of Samuel, and the writings of King David in the Psalms; Proverbs and Chronicles.

Because of these things the nation was divided amongst its own people, some following after the ruling power on earth, (the King and his family) looking for earthly wealth, earthly positions and earthly power **[very similar to the situation we have in the world today]**.

Others followed after the Commandments of God, possibly under punishment and hardship, but never worrying about this, just serving their Lord God Almighty as best they possibly could.

The records do not say when God Almighty first called Elijah to be a Prophet, or under what circumstances Elijah was filled with the anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

What we can assume is that the encounter must have been dramatic and very clear, because it completely changed his life forever. It gave Elijah the courage to walk unannounced into the palace of King Ahab and

proclaim God's judgment upon the nation of Israel. You don't do that sort of thing, unless you are absolutely sure of yourself.

Can you imagine an unknown person trying to enter Buckingham Palace, to deliver a message like this to the Queen of England? Imagine the reaction of the security guards.

"Where do you think you are going, Sonny?" they would ask. He would reply: "I have a message for the Queen of England from God Almighty". The security guards would either burst out laughing or tell you to leave. "Get on your way", or call the medical teams and have you sent for psychiatric care.

In today's day and age it just would not happen, but back then, nearly three thousand years ago, it could have occurred, as the security guards had great respect for the recognised "men of God". This unfortunately is not the case today.

This attitude is clearly seen in the account of the encounter between the Prophet Samuel and King Saul. The story goes like this:

King Saul had just returned from battle and was sitting in his palace, conducting matters of State, matters of great importance. In fact he was deciding how to divide up the spoils and the treasures of the recently concluded battle, as well as trying to decide what to do with the opposing king, whom his men had taken hostage in the battle, **contrary to God's instructions.**

In taking hostages during the battle, the army of King Saul had disobeyed the commandments of the Lord, as conveyed to him through Samuel, the Prophet.

Samuel marched straight into the palace chamber, past all the guards, past all the assistants, members of advisory boards, members of councils, etc. and straight up to the King, to deliver the message from God Almighty to the King:

"Your kingdom shall be torn from you."

After delivering the message to King Saul, the Prophet Elijah left the palace without interference. He was a recognised Prophet, a man chosen by God Almighty Himself. No man dared to interfere with his passage, for all the people feared the power of God, given to the Prophets.

For Elijah to be able to enter into the palace of King Ahab unmolested, to confront the King, probably indicates that he was already recognised as a Prophet within the country by his past deeds, even though they are not recorded in the books of 1 Kings or in the Book of the Chronicles.

Elijah, like Samuel, delivered a message of God's judgment against the king and the whole nation of Israel: "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before Whom I stand, there shall be no dew or rain these years, but according to my word".

God Almighty delivered a terrible message to this nation of Israel through the Prophet Elijah, which means something like this: ***"I have decided to turn off the supply of life to your nation, because you have turned your hearts and minds away from Me; I chose you to be my people and you chose me to be your God. You swore to follow all the laws that I gave to you through Moses, and I promised to shower blessings upon you, if you followed after and were obedient to Me. But I also promised to curse you if you were disobedient to Me and to bring down upon you the plagues and trials of the Pharaohs of Egypt. Therefore I have turned off the Heavens which supply dew and rain to the earth so that you will see and know that I AM the Lord God of Israel, the Almighty Creator of the universe and that your actions are a sin and an abomination before my sight".***

Immediately after Elijah pronounced this prophecy before the throne of King Ahab there must have been confusion and doubt among the people.

The priests of "Baal" would have tried to disclaim the prophecy as heresy, and re-assure the king that this situation would not come to pass - the "god of Baal" would not allow this to happen. They may have even falsely prophesied peace, prosperity and good harvests for the nation of Israel and Samaria, trying to placate the fears of the king and queen and all the palace officials.

But some of the people would remember stories they had been told by their fathers and grandfathers about the wonderful things that the LORD GOD JEHOVAH had done in the past. They would remember also what happened

to the people who rebelled against God in the desert, at the time of Moses, and how God Almighty had opened up the earth to kill them all. They would remember and suddenly realise that the prophecy could possibly be true.

The people would be waiting and watching the sky every day, to see if the rainy season would come. Every day was the same, clear skies, no dew on the ground, no rain - and the land began to dry up, and the plants to wither and die.

Elijah had been obedient to God, by giving the message to the people. God Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, knew that He had to protect Elijah from the wrath and anger of the people, when they came to realise that the prophecy was indeed true. **It is important to remember the God Almighty has promised that He will always protect and feed people who are obedient to His commandments and His guiding directions.** God Almighty could easily have told Elijah to go to another country until the drought was over, but that would not have given any glory to the Lord, nor would it have built up the faith of Elijah, whilst the king's men were searching for him. God had to provide food and shelter for Elijah, so that Elijah and the whole Jewish Nation would recognise the glory of God and that the **hand of the Lord was upon Elijah**.

After delivering the messages of judgment against the king and the nation of Israel, the Lord commanded Elijah to turn east and go over the river Jordan [back into the Promised Land] and hide by the small brook called Cherith, about sixty kilometres from Samaria. God promised Elijah that the ravens would bring him bread and meat twice every day to feed him, under the Divine commandments of the Lord.

Many people today, especially in the eastern culture countries, are amazed by this part of the Holy Scriptures, as they see the ravens fighting among themselves for any food which is available. They tear it to pieces and immediately swallow it, so that another bird cannot get it away from them.

Elijah, also, must have been surprised by this message from the Lord about how he was to receive his daily provisions. But Elijah had come to know and understand that **God's ways are always far superior to our ways.** So while all the king's men were searching for him throughout the countryside, Elijah rested by the brook, drinking the pure clear spring water and receiving meat and bread from the ravens each day. This continued for several weeks until the brook began to dry up as all the land was now parched and cracking up from the lack of dew and rain.

Despite the physical surroundings of the land, Elijah continued to trust in the Lord for his provisions. Here indeed was a good example of a person literally living by his faith in God.

Many people today are not like Elijah, but more like the Apostle Peter. They start out trusting God Almighty (through Jesus Christ, His Son) as they take their first steps of faith and just like Peter they boldly step out of the boat, out of their normal surroundings, (or levels of spiritual faith) onto the troubled waters of everyday life.

Very soon they start to look at the waves and hear the storms of life around them, their faith disappears and they falter, with the result that they fail in their trials and in their endeavour.

At this stage of his life, Elijah was not like that. Elijah believed that God would supply all of his needs, because he was being obedient to the Lord's Word and instructions. At just the time when there was not enough water to continue to supply his needs, the voice of the Lord is heard again by Elijah.

"Elijah, I want you to get up from here and go to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon. I have commanded a widow woman to provide food for you there."

This instruction from the Lord as to how He plans to provide food for Elijah is just as strange as the ravens providing bread and meat before.

To anyone at that time, (when already food shortages were common place) this must have sounded a very strange instruction to receive from the Lord, especially for Elijah.

Zarephath was situated on the coast of Sidon, in Phoenicia, over one hundred and sixty kilometres away. To reach this small city, Elijah had to travel right across the land of Israel, down almost the complete Jordan valley, a valley which is below sea level for some parts of its length. In summer the temperatures are in excess of forty degrees Celsius during the daytime, and at night-time quite cool. In some cases there is frost on the ground at night in the winter.

At this time, it has not rained for several months, the land is parched from lack of water, the crops have failed, everybody is starting to suffer from the effects of the famine due to the sudden lack of food. Into this situation Elijah has to venture. He has to put his trust completely in the Lord. To stay where he is will only result in his death by starvation, or thirst.

While travelling along the roads Elijah has to keep his eyes constantly open for the servants of the king who are scouring the land looking for him, to bring him to Samaria to stand before the king and to command it to rain again.

At this time we get a good picture of what it is to be a servant of the Lord, a person who trusts the Lord completely.

Elijah walks the one hundred and sixty kilometres, (a feat in itself for any person, and doubly so considering the climate, lack of water and the difficult terrain) and finally arrives at the city gates of Zarephath.

In the Bible we are told that God's time is always perfect, now we see God's timing coming into action.

God Almighty told Elijah before he left for Zarephath, that a widow would supply his food. God Almighty did not tell Elijah the widow's name, nor how to find her when he arrives at the city.

Even without this information Elijah has obeyed the Lord and travelled to Zarephath and is now just outside the city gates. Elijah has done this because he believes that the Lord will reveal the widow at the appropriate time to him.

When Elijah arrives at the city gates, a widow is gathering firewood to prepare the evening meal. God is about to provide **showers of blessings** upon the widow woman, but it all depends upon her reactions when she is asked by a complete stranger for food and water.

To understand the significance of the miracle God Almighty is about to perform, we must first become acquainted with the customs of the times we are imagining that we are living in as we journey with Elijah along the course of his life.

When a husband died, (unless the wife could quickly find a new partner and re-marry, or had grown-up sons to provide food and clothing for her) the wife was at the mercy of the local community. She was permitted by custom to go into the fields after the reapers and gather up any left over wheat that the reapers missed, or to pick the grain left over after the threshing (gleanings). [This custom is clearly explained in the Bible, in the Book of Ruth]

From these gleanings she was to provide for her family, until they, the children, were able to go out and to get food, work and clothing for themselves.

But at this time in history, things were not going too well. There had not been any rain for several months, most of the crops had failed, the people were already suffering from the effects of famine. There would be almost no food **LEFT OVER**, for the widow woman, because the local people would be very careful to collect all the food for themselves.

So now let us resume the story.

Elijah approaches the city gates, to see a widow woman collecting sticks to build a fire for the evening meal.

Elijah first asks the widow woman for a vessel of water, so that he might quench his thirst. Without hesitation, and in complete accordance with the customs of the day, she goes to get the traveller a vessel of water.

To provide for a visitor is in keeping with the customs of the Arabic and Jewish peoples, even today. [It is a pity that other nations do not recognise this age-old custom.]

But as she goes to get the water Elijah adds an additional request to this widow woman, who is a complete stranger to him. "Please bring me a piece of bread, also in your hand, so that I may eat of it".

This request is too much for the widow woman, despite the customs. Unbeknown to Elijah, she is presently gathering wood so that she and her young son can eat the last of their food and then die, because the famine is harsh upon the land. To be asked to share the last of their food with a complete stranger must have seemed to the widow woman beyond comprehension, so she answers Elijah in the following way :

"As the Lord your God lives, I do not have any bread baked, because I only have a handful of meal flour left in the jar and a small amount of oil in the bottle. (I have only enough to make a small roti for my son and myself). As you can see I am gathering a few small sticks together so that I may go into my house and bake the meal for my son and myself, then we will pray to the Lord and die, because this is all the food that we have left."

There is a very interesting thing about this statement of the widow woman. She did not say :- "AS THE LORD MY GOD LIVES", but she said :- "AS THE LORD YOUR GOD LIVES.

She could see by the dress of Elijah, that he was a Hebrew from over the border, in the Kingdom of Israel. She knew that the Hebrews feared their God and how their God had passed judgment upon the whole region because of their disobedience, rebellion and sins against Him.

She was telling Elijah that before **HIS GOD** she did not have enough food to share with him and she was very sorry that she could not offer better hospitality to him. It is unlikely that she knew the stranger's identity to be that of Elijah the Prophet, at that time.

Elijah's answer to her is kind and understanding, full of compassion and flavoured with the blessings of God.

"Do not worry about that, have no fear, you go and prepare the meal and the cakes just as you have said. While you are preparing the meal, please make a tiny little cake first for me and bring it to me, then continue to prepare the remainder of the meal for yourself and your son from what is leftover. FOR THUS SAYETH THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, THE JAR OF MEAL SHALL NOT BECOME EMPTY, NOR SHALL THE OIL DISAPPEAR FROM YOUR HOUSE, UNTIL THE DAY THAT THE LORD GOD SENDS RAIN DOWN UPON THE EARTH".

The widow woman did not doubt the words of prophecy just spoken to her by Elijah. She did not consider that he had said this so that he might share that last morsel of food with her before they all died. Here was a woman of simple faith trusting in the promises of the words spoken in the name of the Lord God Almighty.

[It is a pity that we don't have more men and woman with this simple faith dwelling among us in the world today !!!]

The widow woman went immediately inside and commenced to prepare the meal and oil into small cakes as Elijah had requested, firstly one for her strange visitor and then a cake for herself and for her son.

When she had finished, she looked into the jar containing the meal and realised that not all the meal had been used up, maybe there was enough for another day's food supply, so she invited Elijah to remain at her house as her guest.

The three of them were provided with food for many days through this miracle of God, as His **SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS** fell down upon the Lord's servant and those living in the house where he was abiding.

It was while Elijah was staying at this house that the widow's son became very ill and died. There was no visible sign of life remaining in him.

The widow woman became hysterical at the death of her only son and accused Elijah and **His God** of causing the death of her son and bringing all her sins back before her face to torment her.

What happens next is an example of the great faith which Elijah has developed with His God. Like Abraham, Elijah knows and understands the exact justice and mercy of God Almighty.

[As far as I, the author, can establish from the Holy Scriptures, no other Prophet of God had ever asked God to perform the miracle that Elijah was about to ask from God Almighty. Others do so afterwards, but this is the first recorded event of such a miracle].

Elijah says to the hysterical woman. **"Please give me your son".** Elijah carries the child upstairs to his own bed-chamber, lays the boy on Elijah's own bed and then starts to pray to the Lord, with questions and an anguished spirit. Elijah confronts the Lord and reasons with Him.

"Lord, you commanded me to come to Zarephath and to live in the house of this widow woman. You promised to provide food for all three of us until the rains come down upon the earth. Why have you brought further pain and suffering to this widow woman by slaying her son ? Is this your way of repaying her for her hospitality to me all these days I have been in her house ? This is her only son, she cannot have another. Who will care for her

after you send me away from here ? Is this just ? Is this merciful ? Lord God I pray that you restore the soul of this widow's son back to him and bring showers of blessings down upon this household by your miraculous powers." Elijah continued to cry out to the Lord as he physically lay upon the body of the child.

Three times Elijah stretched himself over the body of the child and continued his plea to the Lord, drawing on the faith he had in his merciful God, that He would restore the life of the child, **even though this had never happened in history before** .

The Scriptures record in 1 Kings 17:22, that the Lord God Almighty heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the boy was returned to him, his life was restored, he revived and was completely healed of his sickness.

In this one small verse of Scripture is a mighty testimony to the faith of Elijah in his God and also a clear indication of the mercy and compassion of God Almighty [the God I also love and serve].

Elijah takes the boy downstairs and hands him back to his mother with the simple words - "**See your son is alive**".

The woman recognises the miracle which has occurred and she gives praise to Elijah, in a special way.

"By this miracle of restoring my son's life to him, I know now, beyond any doubt, that you are a man of God and that the Word of the Lord which comes from your mouth is the TRUTH."

The Scriptures do not give any further account of the life of this widow woman from Sidon, nor of the son who was restored to life through the faith of Elijah and the compassion of the God of Israel, but I am sure that the whole town of Zarephath knew the story of how the servant of God had restored her son back to life, as this story now is included in the Old Testament of the Bible, taken from the Jewish religious writings, so it was widely proclaimed in the Jewish synagogues of Judah and Israel as one of the miracles of God of this time, through the prophet Elijah.

Elijah continued to remain in Zarephath many days after this miracle occurred; seeing the country getting drier and drier; seeing the people and the animals suffering from the lack of food and water; seeing the land become more and more parched, with the springs and wells, one by one, ceasing to give forth their life-saving water.

Slowly Elijah could see the Hand of God gripping the very lives of the people, but still they remained stubborn, still they worshipped the god of baal, still they refused to repent of their sins and to return to the God Almighty, who has chosen them from among all the races of people on earth, to be His people.

God's judgment and punishment had been brought down upon His people and the nations around them, but they still refused to see their wrongdoing. Now wisdom and mercy were to be used by God to awaken the people and to turn their faces back to Him. (If one message from God Almighty does not awaken His people, He will use another direction to get their attention).

Three years had passed since the original commandment had come to Elijah from God Almighty, to go and proclaim to King Ahab the beginning of the drought. King Ahab had sent many of his servants to all the neighbouring countries, in search of Elijah, but none of them could find Him.

In the land of Samaria however, not all the people had turned away to follow other gods. Some, like Obadiah, the Governor of King Ahab's household, was a man who feared God Almighty and had served him since his very youth.

In the time of persecution of the Jewish prophets by Queen Jezebel, Obadiah, at the risk of his job and his life, had taken one hundred of the prophets and secretly hidden them in caves, in two lots of fifty. He had faithfully continued to feed them on bread and water during the time of famine (probably with the left-over food from the king's own table).

Obadiah is now summoned before the King because the famine has become so severe in Samaria that there is a possibility that the king's own stable of beautiful horses and mules shall die if they are not able to find any more grass and water for them.

It is interesting to note that the king has summoned Obadiah to him because he is more worried about the welfare of his horses and mules than of his loyal subjects, the people in his kingdom. Many people in high places

of authority today, also; wrongly place their priorities on things which belong to them, instead of on the people living in stressful situations around them.

King Ahab tells Obadiah that they will split the kingdom of Samaria in half and travel through it, each searching half of the kingdom for food and water.

At the same time, the Lord commands Elijah to go back into Samaria and to confront King Ahab, because the Lord is going to command it to rain again on the land of Samaria, at the word of Elijah.

As Obadiah travels through half of Samaria, looking for grass and water for the king's animals, he meets Elijah coming from Zarephath, going up to Samaria city to confront the king.

Obadiah recognises Elijah, but he is not sure if it is a mirage, or the real person, because he falls down upon his face and asks the image in front of him the following question :- "Are you my lord Elijah ? Is it really truly you ?"

"Yes, Obadiah, it is really me. Go tell your master, the king, that I want to see him. Go tell him that Elijah is here and wishes to speak with him." replies Elijah.

Upon receiving this instruction from Elijah, Obadiah becomes very afraid and pleads with Elijah:

"What terrible sin have I, committed before God, that you would deliver me into the hands of the king, to be killed ? Please tell me what I have done. Don't you know that the king has been searching for you in all the neighbouring countries and threatening each nation when they cannot deliver you into his hands ? Despite this you tell me to go and tell him that Elijah is here. As soon as I leave you now, the Spirit of the Lord will take you away from here and hide you as before, and when I tell the king that you are here and he cannot find you, he will kill me in his anger. Don't you know that I have feared and served the Lord from my youth ? Are you not aware that I have taken one hundred of the prophets of Israel and hidden them from Queen Jezebel so that she could not kill them, and that I have been feeding them on bread and water all this time, at the risk of my own life ? Even after I have done all these things for God Almighty, you still want to send me to the king, so he will kill me ?"

From this outburst Elijah can see that Obadiah is indeed afraid to take this news to the king, in case Elijah shall be taken away by the Spirit of the Lord.

In today's technological age, many dispute the very existence of THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD, even of God Almighty Himself. It clearly shows that we, like the people of Israel of that generation, have turned away to follow after other gods.

To overcome this problem, Elijah reassures Obadiah, in such a way that he knows that Elijah is not trying to trick him, or bring him to any harm.

Elijah replies to him with these words :- **"As the Lord of Hosts lives, before whom we both stand, I will surely show myself to King Ahab today".** Obadiah, thus reassured, goes off to inform the king that Elijah wishes to meet him.

King Ahab immediately stops searching for the water and comes to confront Elijah, his anger building up with each step. He wants to punish Elijah for causing all the problems among the nations.

When King Ahab meets Elijah, he confronts him with a question :- "Are you the prophet who caused all this trouble and suffering throughout the length and breadth of Israel ? What have you got to say for yourself, before I pass judgment upon you ?"

Elijah's reply to the king did not made the king any happier, or less angry:- "I have not brought this trouble throughout Israel, but you have, you and your father's house, by forsaking the commandments of the Lord God of Israel and building spirit-houses to other gods, following after the god of Baal. You have brought this judgment down upon your own head and upon the heads of all the people of Israel. **Therefore the Lord God of Israel has commanded that you gather together all of Israel at Mount Carmel and you are also commanded to bring with you the 450 false prophets of Baal and the 400 false prophets of Asherab, who eat frequently at Queen Jezebel's own table**".

We now have a very interesting situation developing. The duly enthroned king, with all the authority and power of his kingdom, is being told what to do, in his own domain, by a prophet of God, whose ONLY AUTHORITY, is that he claims to be able to receive Divine instructions from God Almighty.

If we look and consider today's society and ways of thinking, can you imagine what would happen ?

In America (USA) they boldly proclaim: **IN GOD WE TRUST**. On every coin, clearly for all the world to see, are inscribed the words :- **IN GOD WE TRUST**. Can you imagine what would happen if a prophet of God (in this century) tried to deliver a message from God Almighty to the President of the United States of America ?

Firstly he would have to get past the secret service guards, (who are always falling over themselves with importance) and try to enter the White House, to be confronted by the many secretaries to under-secretaries, who would all inform you "that the President is very, very busy - and anyway you don't have an appointment !!!"

"You say that you are a prophet ? Which denomination do you say that you belong to ? Please show me your credentials, (duly stamped by God Almighty Himself) proclaiming that you are His authorised representative, not some impostor.

Anyway, the United States of America does not have diplomatic relations with Heaven, so we don't recognise your credentials, even if they are genuine."

The prophet would probably be arrested, taken for psychiatric treatment and discreetly forgotten.

This partly comic situation shows how far the nations of the world today have fallen away from God. This indicates how they no longer revere or respect the **Word of God, or God's servants - the prophets. IT IS A SIGN OF THE LAST DAYS !!!**

Even though King Ahab was now following after the god of Baal, he knew of the power and authority that a prophet of God Almighty was able to use. He did not question the right or authority of Elijah to give this commandment from God Almighty. He immediately sent messengers throughout all of Israel, commanding them **in the name of the Lord God of Israel** to assemble at Mount Carmel to hear the message from the prophet. He also commanded that the 450 false prophets of Baal and the 400 false prophets of Asherab be present, to hear the judgment of the Lord God Almighty upon the nation of Israel.

When all of the nation of Israel was assembled, Elijah drew near to the people and commenced to chastise them.

"How long will you waver between two gods ? Why can't you make up your minds ? If the Lord God of Israel is GOD, why don't you follow Him ? On the other hand, if Baal is god, why don't you follow him ?"

The assembled people hung their heads in shame, they did not answer him, or give him any comments.

"Do you know that only I am left of the prophets of the Lord God of Israel ? but you have today before you 450 men who call themselves prophets of the god, Baal? Today we will have a test, to prove who is the real God and who is false.

Let two bulls be chosen by the nation of Israel and given to us. Let the prophets of baal choose one of these bulls and I will take the other. The prophets of Baal shall then take their chosen bull, kill it according to their customs and cut it into pieces. They shall prepare an altar, put wood upon the altar and then place the pieces of meat upon the wood, BUT PUT NO FIRE TO THIS OFFERING. I will do the same. I will take the remaining bull and kill it according to the laws given to us by God Almighty, through Moses and the High priests. I will cut it into pieces and place it upon wood on an altar I have constructed to the Lord. I also will not put fire to the offering.

Let the prophets of Baal call upon their God and I will call upon the Lord God of Israel, and the **ONE WHO ANSWERS BY SENDING DOWN FIRE FROM HEAVEN TO CONSUME THE OFFERING, LET HIM BE THE TRUE GOD**".

The nation of Israel replied :- "It is a fair test for the Gods - it is well spoken. Let the Gods themselves prove who is real and who is false amongst us."

Elijah said to the prophets of Baal. "There are 450 of you, please you choose and dress your bull first. Call upon the name of your god, but put no fire under your offering."

With much fanfare and ritual the 450 prophets of Baal took the bull, offered it up to their god, killed it and commenced to cut it into pieces to lay upon their altar.

Others quickly gathered the firewood and commenced to build their altar, dancing and singing as they worked, calling upon Baal to honour them before the people and bring fire down from Heaven upon the offering being prepared by them.

From early morning until noon - for three hours, they sang, they danced, they prayed, calling for Baal to hear them, calling upon Baal to answer their prayers, to send down fire from above, to consume their offering - BUT NO ANSWER !!!

At midday Elijah started to joke with the people and to jeer at the prophets of Baal saying :- "Cry out louder to your god. Maybe he is sleeping and you need to awaken him; or maybe he has gone on a journey and you need to send couriers after him; or perhaps your god is not happy with you, so he will not answer your prayers."

With this counsel from Elijah, the prophets of Baal increased their efforts, hitting themselves with sharp objects, causing their blood to flow, dancing and limping around the altar they had made - **but still no answer from their god !!!**.

They continued like this until the time of the Jewish evening sacrifice, which means they had been shouting and praying to their god for over eight hours, without any answer.

Elijah gave them plenty of time to prove the power of their god, but they had failed. Elijah now invites the people to draw near to him.

Firstly Elijah commences to repair the old altar, which earlier had been destroyed under the orders of Queen Jezebel.

Secondly Elijah takes twelve stones, <u>one stone as a symbol for each of the tribes of Israel,</u> and commences to build upon the old altar. This altar is to represent all the tribes of Israel. Then, to the puzzlement and confusion of the people, Elijah digs a trench all around the altar, deep enough to contain two bushels of seed. He then places the wood on the altar, ready to receive the meat offering as a sacrifice to the Lord God of Israel.

When all these preparations are completed, Elijah commences to cut up the bull for the sacrifice. To ensure that everything is in order for the Lord, Elijah orders that four jugs, used for the sacrificial purification, each containing approximately twenty gallons of water, be filled up and poured out over the offering.

Elijah orders that this be done three times, making twelve jugs of water in all, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

But why did Elijah do this ?? The nation of Israel watching what Elijah was doing, must have been asking this same question. With over eighty gallons of water poured out over the offering and the wood, it would be very difficult to start a fire (by natural means). The people were confused.

But God had given His Wisdom and Revelation Knowledge to Elijah, (both gifts of the Holy Spirit, referred to in 1. Corinthians chapter 12). God could not bless the people of Israel in their present state, because they had rebelled against him and turned to other gods. At this present time they were a sinful nation in the eyes of the Lord God Almighty. Before God could bless it, the nation of Israel had to become spiritually clean, it had to be BAPTISED AGAIN.

The Israelites had been baptised the **first time** when they went through the Red Sea, out of slavery and the sin of Egypt, into the wilderness, as the beginning of the pure nation of Israel chosen by God Himself.

But here in the wilderness of Sinai they rebelled against God, became disobedient and turned away from Him. As a result of this rebellion one whole generation of the nation of Israel perished in the desert.

The nation of Israel was symbolically baptised a **second time**, when the people passed dry through the river Jordan, before the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, into the Promised Land, to fulfil the promise given by God Almighty to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Jacob's name was later changed by God to be called Israel).

Now, on Mount Carmel, in front of the king and the whole nation of Israel, Elijah was performing a symbolic baptism of the nation, by pouring the purification water over the twelve stones, which represented and symbolised the twelve tribes of Israel, thus cleansing them of their previous sins and making them appear righteous in the sight of the Lord.

Only when the nation was righteous, could God Almighty accept their offering and again accept them as His chosen people.

Not until this baptism was completed did Elijah commence to pray to the Lord. This was at the approximate time of the evening sacrifice.

"Oh Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), let it be known among all the nations this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant; that I have done all these things today, that I have performed all these actions today, at Your direction and by Your Word. Hear me, oh Lord! Hear me! That these people, gathered here may know and recognise that You, the Lord, are God, and that today You have turned their rebellious hearts back to Yourself".

When Elijah stopped praying this prayer of supplication, the FIRE OF THE LORD fell down from Heaven in a blinding ball of light, and consumed the bull sacrifice that Elijah had prepared on behalf of the nation of Israel.

In addition the FIRE OF THE LORD consumed the altar of stones, the wood, the water and even the dust about the sacrifice area, so there was nothing left, except a complete silence.

When the people saw what had happened, when they realised that God had actually heard the prayer of Elijah and had answered his prayer with the FIRE OF THE LORD, they all fell on their faces, crying out from the bottom of their hearts.

"THE LORD - HE IS GOD,

THE LORD - HE IS GOD,

THE LORD - HE IS GOD."

Then Elijah cried out : "Seize all the false prophets of Baal, don't let any escape, not even one. Do you not remember God's laws about false prophets and their punishments ?"

The people seized all the false prophets and at the instruction of Elijah took them down the mountainside to the brook Kishon.

Elijah again reminded the people of God's laws pertaining to the punishments of false prophets as recorded by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 13, which are recorded here in their complete form, for your consideration. [Reproduced from the AMPLIFIED BIBLE, published by Zondervan Bible Publishers.]

"If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or wonder, And the sign or the wonder comes to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord you God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being. You shall walk after the Lord your God and [reverently] fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him, and cling to Him. But that prophet or dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has talked rebellion and turning away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage; that man has tried to draw you aside from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put the evil away from your midst."

The Lord God also made additional laws about the practices of the nation of Israel and its prophets in Deuteronomy chapter 18, again reproduced here from the Amplified Bible. Commencing from Verse 9 :-

"When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of these nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, or who uses divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord; and it is because of these abominable practices that the Lord is driving them out from before you. You shall be blameless (and absolutely true) to the Lord your God. For these nations, whom you shall dispossess, listen to soothsayers and diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so. The lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among the midst of your brethren, like me [Moses]; to him you shall listen. This is what you desired (and asked) of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die".

And the Lord said to me, "They have well said all that they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet from among their own brethren, like you, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not harken to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And if you say in your [mind and] heart, How shall we know which words the Lord has spoken ? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or prove true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."

After Elijah had reminded the people of God's laws concerning the false prophets, he killed all the 450 false prophets of Baal.

In today's supposedly enlightened society, we accept the astrology predictions which appear on TV, or in the newspapers each day, without killing the authors.

Some people go to fortune tellers, (even the former President of the United States, Mr. Ronald Reagan) or go to their favourite Gurus (as did the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Ms. Benazir Bhutto) to seek guidance as to the future.

But the Scriptures clearly show us that these actions are an abomination before the Lord God Almighty, and they are held accountable, as the leaders of their respective nations, for these sins before God.

[Author's note :- It is interesting to note that Elijah acted under the instruction of God Almighty to assemble the 450 false prophets of Baal **and the 400 false prophets of Asherab** on Mount Carmel, to witness this test of the god of Baal versus the God of Israel and prove to the people of Israel that God Almighty is the only true living God.

Elijah told the people what was to happen to false prophets and as a result the 450 false prophets of Baal were killed. The 400 false prophets of Asherab, who did not participate in the test, <u>who were only witnesses to it, were not harmed in any way.</u> There are no contradictions in God's Holy Word, but things like this sometimes are puzzling to us humans, who do not possess the Divine Wisdom of God Almighty.

Why did Elijah not command that the 400 prophets of Asherab be also killed along with the 450 prophets of Baal ?]

After all the prophets of Baal had been slain, Elijah invited King Ahab to go and prepare a feast, to eat and drink, for the Lord was about to send an abundance of rain and blessings down upon the nation. King Ahab and his assembled followers went to eat and drink and to talk of the wonderful things which they seen happen before their very eyes. They would have agreed that they had been foolish, to be misled by these false prophets, and would also probably have said that they would never do this again; [But unfortunately, in the long run, man can never keep his word; he always puts his own interests for power, greed or sexual appetites; above his love and obedience for God.]

While all the feasting and merry making was going on, Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel with his servant, got down on his knees and bowed his face to the ground between his knees.

He offered prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord for all of His goodness and for turning the hearts of the people back to Himself. Elijah now asked the Lord to send the rain as He had promised. **At the Word of your servant, Elijah**.

Elijah told his servant to go and look out towards the sea and tell him if he saw anything. The servant looked out to sea, strained his eyes in the intense heat, but "No, nothing, only clear blue skies." Again Elijah tells the servant to go and look, a second time, a third time, but still nothing.

Did Elijah doubt the hand of the Lord when He did not send rain at his first request, or his second or his third ? NO! Seven times Elijah tells the servant to go and search the skies. Six times he returns to tell Elijah that the sky is clear, but Elijah still believes that the Lord will honour His Word and send the rain.

On the seventh time the servant notices a small white puff of cloud coming up out of the sea. It is so small that he has to look very hard for some time before he is sure that his eyes are not playing tricks with him.

He runs back and tells Elijah : "Yes, there is a small cloud coming up out of the sea, but it is very small."

Elijah tells his servant : “Go up and tell King Ahab to arrange to harness his horse to the chariot, quickly go down the mountain back to Samaria, otherwise the rain will stop him.” Hurriedly King Ahab heads down the mountain towards the city of Jezreel.

The little white cloud seemed to grow at a mighty rate, firstly into a large white cloud and then changing colour until it became an ominous black and grey colour which is common before the onset of a storm of immense magnitude. All the people knew that it was going to rain , probably by the bucketfuls.

The Spirit of the Lord came down upon Elijah and he wrapped his clothes about his loins and started to run towards Jezreel, which was about twenty miles away. The power of the Lord was so great upon Elijah, that the distance did not cause him any fatigue. His speed was so great that he out-distanced King Ahab in his horse-drawn chariot, reaching the city of Jezreel before him.

When King Ahab arrived at the city it was already pouring with rain and he proceeded to tell Queen Jezebel all that the prophet Elijah had done and how the Lord God of Israel had sent down fire from Heaven to consume the sacrifices, proving that He was the real Living God. The King also told how Elijah had taken the 450 false prophets of Baal and had them killed at the brook Kishon, thus removing this temptation from before the eyes of the people of Israel.

Instead of rejoicing with her husband, King Ahab, Queen Jezebel became extremely angry and bitter. She sent a messenger to Elijah with the following message :- “Let the gods kill me also if I don’t have you killed before this time tomorrow, for killing the prophets of Baal and for making a fool of my husband before the whole nation of Israel.”

Upon receiving this news, Elijah become very much afraid. His trust and faith in the Lord his God just seemed to melt away to nothing and he fled for his life. He ran and ran until he came to Beersheba, in the province of Judah, a distance of over eighty miles from Jezreel.

Here was a man whom the Lord had protected from the army of King Ahab, when they were searching for him. Here was the man that the Lord had provided with food in the desert, fed by the ravens. Here was the man whom had been provided with food in the widow’s house, by the supernatural powers of the Lord. Here was the man who had prayed to the Lord to restore the life of the widow woman’s only son. Here was a man of great faith and trust in the Lord.

But all that faith just seemed to vanish when the queen threatened his life, and he fled into the wilderness. This only goes to show that the threat given by a woman is more feared than the same threat given by a man.

Elijah did not stop to consider that the Lord would protect him. Elijah did not pray to the Lord, to inquire which way he should go to escape the threat to his life, issued by Queen Jezebel; he just turned on his heel and fled.

After reaching Beersheba he told his servant to remain there and he proceeded onwards for another day’s journey and then sat down under the shade of a tree, completely exhausted. He was exhausted physically and he was exhausted spiritually. He prayed that the Lord might take his life, because he was no better then his forefathers. He was in a state of total confusion and depression.

He had fled from Queen Jezebel because he feared that she would take his life. Now he is praying to the Lord to take his life from him; it does not make any sense !

The Lord, in His bountiful mercy and compassion, understands the trials and tribulations of His people. He knows that Elijah is confused and exhausted, He knows that Elijah is in despair and He sends help (as He always does) to those of His servants who are obedient to Him.

While Elijah is sleeping an angel touches him on the shoulder and says: “Arise and eat”. Elijah looks around and sees that a cake is baking on the hot coals and beside his head is a bottle of water. He sits up and after he has eaten the cake and drunk the water he falls into an exhausted sleep again.

While he was still sleeping the angel came again and woke him with the words : “Get up and eat some more food, for the journey will be very exhausting for you.”

Elijah looked around and again saw food and water set out before him. He ate as much as he desired and then continued his journey towards Mount Horeb, the place he had decided to go to hide out from the threat upon his life from Queen Jezebel, and to hide, also, from the presence of the Lord.

He found a cave and prepared it to be his dwelling place and lay down to sleep. But the voice of the Lord came to him with the following strange question : ***"What are you doing here Elijah"*** **?**

Elijah replied by pouring out his heart to the Lord. "I have been very conscientious for the Lord God of Hosts. The Israelites have rebelled against You, they have forsaken Your covenants, they have destroyed and thrown down Your altars and followed after other gods. They have taken and killed all of Your prophets and I am the only one left and my life is threatened also."

The Lord said to Elijah : " Come out from your hiding place and stand on the mountain top before Me," and Elijah did as the Lord commanded him.

As Elijah went out onto the mountain top the stillness was replaced by a strong wind. The **Wind of the Lord** was so strong that the mountains themselves started to shake and tremble with bits of rock being blown off the mountainside into the valley below. Elijah had to cling to and hide behind a rocky abutment so that he would not be battered against the rocks or blown over the edge into the valley below. But despite the force of the wind Elijah did not hear any instruction or correction from the Lord.

After the wind there was **an earthquake** and the whole mountain seemed as if it was going to melt underneath Elijah's feet as it twisted and turned first one way and then the other. Great gaps opened up in the ground not far away from Elijah and parts of the mountain fell into the gaps. Lava and gasses erupted out of the holes which had opened up in the mountainside; but still Elijah did not hear any instructions from the Lord.

The gasses erupted into fire and the whole side of the mountain was burning as the **Fire of the Lord** travelled across the hill-side, consuming everything in its path. Elijah hid in a small cave to seek protection from the heat and flames of the Fire of the Lord.

When the fire had passed, there came a deathly stillness upon the mountainside. There was no sound of any birds, no sound of any animals; a complete stillness enveloped the face of the mountainside. Elijah could almost feel the presence of the Lord descending upon the mountain top, yet Elijah was not afraid of this presence.

When Elijah heard the **still small voice** coming from outside the cave, he covered his face with his cloak and walked to the entrance of the cave, expecting to come face to face with the Lord. He heard the same still small voice of the Lord, with the same question. ***"What are you doing here Elijah ?"***

But the Lord was really asking Elijah a series of questions and chiding him for his loss of faith in the Lord's protection of His anointed prophet.

"Why have you fled from the face of a woman, who has threatened your life, when you are doing the work I have sent you to do ? "Why did you leave your servant behind and come on up to Mount Horeb on your own to sit here and feel sorry for yourself ? Why have you forsaken the trust in the Lord, as your protection from all your adversaries ? Did I not provide food for you in the desert, sent to you each day by the ravens ? Did I not provide meal and oil for you in the widow woman's house, from a jar that was almost empty ?

Did I not hide you from all the soldiers of the king as they travelled throughout the kingdom looking for you ? Didn't you realise that I would never let any harm come to you whilst ever you were obedient to Me and continued to do the work that I have called you to do ? Elijah, Elijah why did you not cry out to Me for guidance, so I could tell you what to do" ?

Again Elijah pours out his heart to the Lord. "I have been very conscientious for the Lord God of hosts. The Israelites have rebelled against You, they have forsaken Your covenants, they have destroyed and thrown down Your altars and followed after other gods. They have taken and killed all of Your prophets and I am the only one left and my life is threatened also."

The Lord continued to chide him as He gave Elijah his new instructions:- "Get up from here and go back into the wilderness, towards Damascus and when you arrive there you shall do the following things as I now command you."

"Firstly you shall seek out Hazael, you shall take a horn of oil and you shall anoint him, in the name of the Lord, to be king over all of Syria.

"Secondly you shall find Jehu, the son of Nimshi. You shall take another horn of oil and you shall anoint him, in the name of the Lord, to be king over all of the nation of Israel.

"Thirdly you shall find Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of the village Abel-meholah, and you shall anoint him to be the prophet of God in your place."

"And this is the message that you shall give to them :- Thus sayeth the

Lord : King Hazael shall destroy all the worshippers of the god Baal, by the sword. But if they escape the sword of King Hazael, then King Jehu shall destroy them with the sword of his army. If anyone escapes the swords of these two armies then it is the responsibility of Elisha, the prophet, to kill them. This is so that I, the Lord thy God, shall not be forced to look down upon this abomination ever again. All the worshippers of Baal are to be destroyed from the face of the earth. Elijah, you were crying out to Me, that you are the only one left who has not turned away from Me. Be assured that there are left in Israel more than seven thousand people who have refused to turn away from Me. These people have refused to bow down to Baal, or to go to the temple and kiss the idols. Be re-assured, Elijah, that everything is in My hands and under My control. All I ask is that you continue to be obedient to my voice and go wherever I send you, so that My plans can be accomplished.

Thus re-assured, Elijah sets off once again to do the work of the Lord, revitalised in Spirit, confident that the Lord will continue to be his guide and protector, provided he continues to be His obedient servant.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

At the commandment of the Lord, Elijah set off into the wilderness, towards Damascus. On the way, he headed for the village of Abel-meholah, to see if he could find Elisha, the man God Almighty had selected to be his replacement as the Prophet of Israel.

It is wonderful to realise that, in the early days, the Lord God Almighty <u>Himself</u> selected who was to be the king over each of the nations in the then civilised world, and who was to be His prophet, or spokesman, upon the earth.

Nowadays, it is the drug smuggler, the political power boss, the rich and famous, or the military dictator, who decides who will run, rob, or ruin, the countries of the world.

In America, in the land which says **"IN GOD WE TRUST"**, the money power-base decides who will be the representatives to govern each of the States and the whole of the USA The people would be more than naive if they thought that the "Christians of America" selected the President of the United States, or that God Almighty sent a prophet down with a horn of oil to anoint him, in the name of the Lord, to be "king over America", as used to happen in the old days, when men had a greater respect for the Word of the Lord.

But enough about today's disasters, let us return to the "Land of Promise", whilst Elijah searches to find his successor.

As Elijah approaches the village, he sees a man out in the fields, ploughing with a train of oxen. He counts them as he approaches and is astounded to find that there are twelve yoke of oxen in the train, one pair of oxen, for each of the tribes of Israel.

The Holy Spirit confirms to Elijah that this is Elisha, the man whom God Almighty had told him to anoint as the future prophet of the Lord God of Israel.

Elisha is unaware of the approach of Elijah; he continues to follow the plough and the oxen, completely engrossed in his work, carefully checking the furrow to make sure that the soil is being turned over deep enough for the forthcoming crop and harvest.

Elijah walks up behind Elisha, and casually throws his cloak over the shoulders of Elisha and continues steadfastly on his journey, never looking back to see the reaction on Elisha's face.

Elisha immediately stops what he is doing, looks at the cloak, leaves the twelve oxen in the middle of the paddock and rushes after Elijah.

Elisha pleads with Elijah in the following way :- "Please sir, let me first go and say farewell to my father and my mother, and then I will follow you, wherever you go".

Elijah has to test the resolve of Elisha, to see if he really understands what has happened to him and is ready to accept the responsibility which is to be placed upon his shoulders, like the symbolic cloak of the Lord.

"Why are you asking me these things? What have I got to do with you? What do you think is the significance of me throwing a cloak over your shoulders? Go back to you work in the fields, I did not do anything to you. I did not ask you to come and follow me. You have to sort this all out for yourself and make up your own mind about what you are going to do with your life."

With determined steps Elisha went to the house, collected his axe and his butcher's knife and took them over near the barn where he usually housed the animals. Then he went back into the field and unyoked the lead pair of oxen. He led them back to the barn, praying to the Lord in his heart as he went, as he sought guidance from the Lord on what he should do.

He carefully removed the chains from the oxen, then the reigns and their wooden yokes. He had standing before him two beautiful beasts, who had faithfully worked in his father's fields, pulling the plough, turning over the soil, to prepare for the harvest each year.

Elisha called two of his father's labourers to come and help him in what he had to do next. With the axe they proceeded to break up the yoke which had been removed from the oxen and prepared the wood ready for a fire. He sent one of the labourers into the house to bring out the large copper cooking urns that his mother used whenever they had a feast, and they carefully placed it on the wood ready for cooking. Then with a prayer to the Lord, he took the axe, turned it over so that the blade was facing outwards from himself, and swinging it with all his force he struck the ox on the side of the forehead with the back of the axe head, stunning it into unconsciousness. Quickly he took the butcher's knife and cut the animal's throat, so that the blood would be pumped out by the last remaining heartbeats of the animal, in accordance with the Law.

While the life blood was still pumping out of the first, Elisha took up the axe and swung it again, striking the second ox in a similar manner, bringing it down unconscious to its knees. Again the knife blade flashed in the sunlight as the throat of the second animal was cut and the blood flowed out onto the ground, as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Very carefully they took the two animals and commenced to remove the skins, cutting up the meat into pieces and placing them into the cooking urns now boiling on the fire. When all the meat was cooked, Elisha sent the servants off to invite all the family and his father's workers to come and sit down to the feast.

When all the people were gathered together, everyone was asking what was the special occasion for the feast. Was Elisha getting married ? What special event had happened to him ? His mother and father could not answer, they were just as puzzled as the other workers.

Elisha stood up and began to explain the reason for the feast. "As long as I can remember, my father and my mother have encouraged me to read and study the Torah and the Talmud, to try and understand how the Lord God Almighty wants us to live our lives, so that we can be a glory and honour to him. I have prayed to the Lord that He may find me an acceptable vessel for His use, in even a small way, so that the nation of Israel may continue to be His chosen people.

I have seen from our past history that the Lord has blessed us abundantly when we have obeyed His commandments, followed His laws and harkened to the voices of His prophets. I have also seen how the Lord has punished us, as a nation, when we have rebelled against His Laws, refused to follow his commandments and closed our ears to the warnings of His prophets. This morning I was out ploughing in the fields, getting them ready for the next planting, when a man came up behind me and threw his cloak over my shoulders and continued on his way. I stopped what I was doing and ran to catch up with him to see who it was, because as yet, I had not seen his face. When I called out for him to stop, he turned around to face me and I saw that the man was Elijah, the prophet of the Lord. I immediately asked permission from him to go and say farewell to my mother and father, then I would follow after him.

He told me to go back to the fields and ponder what had happened. He said that I must pray to the Lord and make up my own mind about my life.

With this in my mind I went back to the field, took the lead oxen, offered them up to the Lord as a celebration offering, and now we sit here, to share in this feast together. I believe that the Lord has commanded Elijah to select me as his servant and for me to learn more and more about the Lord and His ways. As soon as this feast is completed I shall rise up, pack my few belongings and follow after Elijah, to be his servant for as long as he needs me."

After this speech Elisha went to his mother and father, kissed them both, packed a few belongings and left by the same road that Elijah had travelled earlier the same day.

That night Elisha slept out in the open, tucked up in his cloak and with a handmade blanket thrown over himself. It was very different to the warm bed he was used to in his father's house and he awoke several times during the night, shivering from the cold.

In the morning he hurriedly ate some of the bread that his mother had handed to him before he had left home, washed this down with some fresh water from a spring by the roadside and then continued on his way.

About midday he came around a corner in the road and he saw a man sitting in the shade of a tree, obviously in prayer. As he drew closer, he realised that the man was indeed Elijah the prophet, the same man who had thrown the cloak of the Lord over his shoulders, the day before.

Elisha came quietly over towards the tree, careful not to interrupt the prayers of Elijah. Elisha was sure that Elijah did not know of his presence, but was completely surprised when Elijah turned towards him, still with his eyes closed, and commenced to speak. "The Lord God of Israel gave me the following commandments as I was standing before the Lord on Mount Carmel, several days ago" :-

"Get up from here and go back into the wilderness towards Damascus, and when you arrive there you shall do the following things, as I now command you. Firstly, you shall seek out Hazael. You shall take a horn of oil and you shall anoint him, in the name of the Lord, to be king over all of Syria. Secondly, you shall find Jehu, the son of Nimshi. You shall take another horn of oil and you shall anoint him, in the name of the Lord, to be king over all the nation of Israel. Thirdly, you shall find Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of the village Abel-meholah, and you shall anoint him to be the prophet of God in your place. And this is the message you shall give to them :- Thus sayeth the Lord God of Israel :- King Hazael shall destroy all the worshippers of the god Baal, by the sword. But if any escape the sword of King Hazael, then King Jehu shall destroy them with the swords of his army. If any escape the swords of these two armies, then it is the responsibility of Elisha, the prophet, to kill them. This is so that I, the Lord thy God, shall not be forced to look down upon this abomination ever again. All the worshippers of Baal are to be destroyed from the face of the earth".

"So I came to your village and threw the cloak of the Lord over your shoulders, as a sign that the Lord had chosen you to fulfil His purpose, as a voice among His people Israel. Now you are here, by your own choice, let us go on towards Damascus to find Hazael and anoint him to be king, as the Lord has commanded."

As they travelled along the road together Elijah explained to Elisha all the things which had happened to him over the last three years, since the Lord had commanded him to go and proclaim to King Ahab that there would be no rain in the land. Elisha marvelled at the miracles that the Lord had performed in keeping His prophet alive during this time.

In particular, Elisha questioned Elijah very closely about the death of the young boy, the son of the widow woman in Zarephath, and how Elijah had prayed to the Lord to have his life restored to him.

[Later, after the death of Elijah, Elisha would use almost the same method, to ask the Lord to restore the life of the son of the Shunamite woman].

So Elijah and Elisha continued on their way towards Damascus, stopping at the synagogues along the way, teaching in the school of prophets, and waiting patiently for the Lord to give the next instruction to the Prophet, as to what he should do. In the meantime, things were starting to heat up across the border in Syria.

King Benhadad, the king of Syria, had gathered together a mighty army, including thirty-two other smaller kingdoms as allies, with many soldiers, horseman and chariots. The kings decided that Israel must be destroyed; **this land must be conquered and destroyed forever.** [This same line of thinking seems to be in the hearts and minds of the Arab nations today. As is in the days of old, this type of thinking will come to the same result - God Almighty will protect His chosen people, as is prophesied in the Book of Jeremiah].

They crossed the border into Israel and met little resistance as they came down through Dan and Hazor along the Jordan valley, across the mountains to Megiddo and then down along the coastal strip to Samaria, the capital of Israel at that time.

When they arrived they completely surrounded the city with their vast armies. King Benhadad called for one of His messengers and gave to him a message to be delivered to King Ahab.

Without any delay, the messenger took a royal chariot to the very gates of the city. Once at the city gates he called out to the guards to let him in, as he had a royal message for King Ahab.

Instructing the Charioteer to leave his sword and his spears outside the gate, the guards escorted the chariot into the city and to the palace gates, where the messenger alighted from the chariot and proceeded into the palace, to give the royal message of King Benhadad, to King Ahab the king of Israel.

"This is the message I have been instructed to give to you on behalf of His Majesty King Benhadad, king of all Syria :- "We have come and invaded your land, and have you and your city completely surrounded by an army at least ten times as big as your own. If we wished, we could destroy you and all your people, but we are going to show mercy to you and your people, for we shall only ask a small token payment from you, to show that you have agreed to become subject to our gods and our laws."

"What are the demands that your king request from us" King Ahab asked. "All the riches which you have, including all your silver and gold, you shall hand over to me. Your prettiest wives and all of your children, you shall surrender to me."

Thinking about the people of Israel and the possible lives he would save if he agreed to these terms, King Ahab agreed, sacrificing his own wives and children for the benefit of the nation of Israel. "Tell your king that I agree to his terms. All that I have is his for the taking. My gold and my silver; even the fairest of my wives. All of these are yours, for the sake of Israel. "

[If you look at the leaders of the nations today, it would be almost impossible to find a leader who would be prepared to sacrifice their own personal wealth, or hand over their wives and children as hostages, so as to save the lives of the people in the nation they have been entrusted to rule.

It is this sort of sacrifice which makes a man stand out in history as a great leader.] Seeing the quick response of king Ahab; how he was prepared to give up his treasures so readily; the king of Syria became greedy. He sent his messengers a second time to King Ahab, and this time the message was different. The messengers told king Ahab the following: "Although I have previously sent messengers to you, saying that you shall deliver to me all your silver and gold, your wives and your children; in addition I will sent my servants to you at the palace tomorrow, at this same hour; and they shall search your palace and the houses of your servants; and all the things that you desire they shall seize and take away."

When the king of Israel heard this new demand he called all the elders of Israel around him and said to them. "Notice how this king changes his minds and grows greedy. See how he now seeks to destroy us. You all know that when he sent his messengers to me demanding my silver, my gold, and even my wives and children, I agreed to his demands; but now he wants to take the spoils of the land - he wants everything."

All of the elders of the nation pleaded with the king not to agree to his new demands. After receiving this counsel from his loyal elders, king Ahab sent the messengers back to the king of Syria, with the following message: "I shall agree to your first demands, to give you my silver, my gold, and even my wives and my children, but your further demands I do not agree to."

When king Benhadad, the king of Syria, heard this response from the king of Israel, he became very angry. He sent his messengers back to the king of Israel with the following threat. " May the gods do to me, and even more, if the rubbish of Samaria is not enough for each of my followers to gather up just one small handful."

King Ahab told the messengers to go back to him and to give him the following answer: " Be very careful not to boast of things you cannot do, otherwise the gods will destroy you - just as you have stated."

When the king of Syria heard this he was sitting drinking with the allied kings around him in his tent. He straightaway issued orders for his army (and the armies of his allies) to be made ready for war against the city of Samaria and the nation of Israel.

All during the night and the following day, the armies moved into positions around the city of Samaria, ready for the command to attack.

Then a prophet came to king Ahab, the king of Israel and gave him the following message from the Lord: Thus says the Lord. Have you seen this great multitude that has been raised as an army against you? Behold, I will deliver them into your hands today; and then you shall know and recognise that I AM, the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel".

Ahab asked the prophet : "By whom shall He do this? What army shall he use ?" The prophet said: ***Thus says the Lord, The army shall be the young men, the bodyguards, of the Governors of the Districts around Samaria".***

Then Ahab asked the prophet. "Who shall order the attack and plan the battle?" The prophet answered: "You shall order the attack."

King Ahab ordered that the bodyguards of the District Governors be brought before him and he counted them; there were only 232 people. He then counted all the members of the army of Israel and there were 7,000 persons. So now 7,232 people were to go out to battle against the army of king Benhadad, and his 32 allied kings; an army of 75,000. This situation came about at the express instructions of the prophet of God, under the command of the king of Israel; who until recently, had been a strong worshipper of the god of baal, a king who refused to worship the God of Israel.

In worldly terms, the odds seem to favour the Syrian king and his allies. However, we must remember that the God of Israel, had promised this land to Abraham and his children, and His power is so great, that it created the universe. [Could it be that the 7,000 persons referred to, were the same persons who had refused to bow down to the god of baal, and had remained loyal in their faith to the God of Israel ?]

King Ahab ordered the battle to commence at noon, a time completely unorthodox in battle terms, (normally battles were commenced just after sunrise) the 232 bodyguards going out first.

The Syrian king and his allied kings were busy getting drunk in their tents, when the messengers brought them the news that men were coming out of the city of Samaria. The king of Samaria, believing that his army was completely invincible, gave to following message to his army commander. "Whether they come in peace, or in war, capture them alive and bring them to me."

So the 232 men marched out into battle, expecting this to be the last day of their lives. The small Israeli army followed behind them, trusting in their God.

When they engaged the enemy, each on killed his opposing man without any apparent difficulty. Now 7,232 of the Syrian army lay dead on the field of battle. The remainder of the army, on hearing the news that the Israelis were killing each man they attacked, turned around on their heels and fled in terror. The Israeli army pursued them. The king of Israel went out into battle himself, attacking the Syrian horseman and killing many of them. But alas, King Benhadad fled among the horseman and escaped being killed on that day.

King Ahab and his army went back into Samaria victorious, as was prophesied by the Prophet of the Lord, without the loss of one single life, because the Lord God Almighty was with them.

Very soon after his return to the city, the king was told that the Prophet of the Lord wanted to see him again. The Prophet was shown into the throne room, and King Ahab awaited anxiously the new instructions from the Lord, given through His appointed Prophet. ***"Go and fortify the nation, make yourself strong, and be very careful about what you must do, for in one year's time, the king of Syria will return to attack you with another large army."***

Meanwhile, the servants of the King of Syria, were trying to explain how they had been defeated. "The God's of Israel are gods of the hills, and we fought them in the hills, that's why we were defeated; but if we go out to fight Israel on the plains, we shall be stronger than they, and we shall defeat them."

This was the explanation that the servants gave to the king of Syria. "We would also suggest that you remove all your allied kings from their positions, replace them with Governors instead. Prepare and army, just as big as this one, that you have just lost, horse for horse, chariot for chariot. We will fight them on the plains and we shall defeat them.

Because his pride had been dented, the king of Syria listened to his servants, heeded their advice and commenced to build another very large army, with hundreds of horses and chariots, ready to go out to battle against the nation of Israel next year.

When all the preparations were completed and the king of Syria had again mustered a mighty army, he ordered them to go up and attack the king of Samaria on the plains at Aphek. Their army was so large it filled the entire countryside, whilst the army of Samaria was like two small flocks of sheep.

Whilst they were encamped awaiting the battle to commence, a Prophet of the Lord came to see the king of Israel, to give him a message of encouragement from the Lord God of Israel. ***"Thus says the Lord: Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys, I will therefore deliver all of this***

great army, this great multitude into your hands, and then you shall know and recognise by experience, that I AM the Lord God of Israel".

They encamped opposite each other, taunting each other to battle for seven days before the battle commenced. On the first day of the battle, the Israelites killed 100,000 foot soldiers. The remainder, on seeing how the battle was going, fled into the city of Aphek. The Lord moved on the city; and the city wall fell down, allowing the Israelites to attack inside the city gates. The remaining soldiers, all 27,000 of them, were killed in the city.

King Benhadad fled into the city with his remaining troops and his servants. They took refuge in the chambers of the city, moving from one house to another, as the Israelite troops searched throughout the city for stragglers. They knew that very soon they would be found and their lives would come to an end.

The servants of king Benhadad were fearful for their lives. They counselled their king in the following way: "We have heard from previous times, that the kings of Israel are kings who show mercy. Let us dress up in sackcloth and cover our heads with ashes, as a sign of our submission, and let us go and seek mercy from the king of Israel. Maybe he will spare your life." To this the king agreed. The servants of the king got dressed up in sackcloth, put ashes on their heads and went out of the city, to plead for their lives (and the life of their king).

When they were brought before the king of Israel, they pleaded their case: "Your servant, Benhadad says, I pray you, let my live."

The King of Israel was surprised that the king was still alive. "Is the king still alive? Why, he is my brother. Go and bring him before me." Thus encouraged, the servants hastily returned to tell the good news to the king of Syria, who shortly after appeared before the king of Israel. The king of Israel told Benhadad to ride in the chariot with him as they returned to the encampment of the Israelites.

Taking this type of treatment as a good sign, Benhadad tempted King Ahab in the following way: "The cities that my father stole from your father, I will return to you. You can also have your own bazaars in Damascus, if you like, just like my father had in Samaria, many years ago."

The king of Samaria, seeing the immediate financial gains from this generous offer, completely forgot the messages of the Prophet and agreed to these terms, sending King Benhadad off to Damascus with a peace agreement, or covenant, along these lines.

So peace was restored to the land of Israel, but the Lord was not happy with king Ahab, because he had not completely destroyed king Benhadad and the Syrian nation, after the Lord had delivered them into his hands.

Let us now continue with the story and see how the Lord deals with his disobedient king.

THE END OF KING AHAB

After sending the king of Syria on his way towards Damascus, king Ahab commenced his journey from the Aphek valley back to the city of Samaria. Meanwhile, the Lord was setting in motion His plans for the destruction of the king.

In the school of the prophets, a son of the prophets said to his neighbour: ***At the commandment of the Lord, strike me, wound me I beg you."*** But the man refused to strike him.

"Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, you shall not live another day. As soon as you leave me, a lion shall kill you for your disobedience."

As soon as the man heard this terrible news, he fled from the son of the prophet. When he left the confines of the village where the school of prophets was established, a lion came out of the bush and attacked, killing him just as the prophet had said it would happen. The news quickly spread throughout the village.

The prophet then approached another man. ***"Strike me, I command you, in the name of the Lord."*** This man did not need any prompting. He had heard what had already happened to the previous man, who had refused to obey the commandment of the Lord, through his prophet. Quickly he took out his sword and struck the prophet a hard blow, so that the prophet was severely, but not mortally wounded.

The prophet departed from the village and went to await the arrival of the king, as he travelled back to the city of Samaria. The prophet disguised himself with bandages on his face and forehead, as well as blood on his clothes from the wound inflicted at the command of the Lord. As the king passed by, the prophet cried out to

him: "Oh gracious king; Your servant went out into the midst of the battle and a man brought a prisoner to me and said. Keep this prisoner, and if he is missing, for any reason, then your life shall be forfeited, or else you shall pay a talent of silver (about US $1,000) for him. As your servant was busy in the throes of the battle, the prisoner escaped. What am I to do?"

The king looked down from his chariot at the disguised prophet and gave his verdict: "Such is your own verdict; you yourself have decided it."

With this the prophet hastily stood up and removed the bandages from his face, so his true identity was revealed. The king recognised him as one of the prophets.

The prophets said to the king: This is the message from the Lord God of Israel. Because you have let go out of your hand, the king of Syria, the man I had given to you, to kill and destroy, your life shall be forfeited for his life; and your people for his people ."

Upon hearing this condemnation of his actions from the prophet, the king went back to Samaria very depressed and disappointed with himself, and the punishment which was to befall him and his nation, because of his disobedience to the Lord.

As he approached very near to his house, he saw Naboth, a Jezreelite, working in his vineyard. Ahab said the Naboth: "Give me your vineyard, so I may convert it into a herbal garden, as it is very near to my own house. I will give you a better vineyard for it, If you don't want that, I will give you the value of the vineyard in cash. What is your decision?"

Here indeed was a good offer from the king; a better, larger vineyard than he already possessed, or a lump sum payment for the value of the vineyard, in cash. Who would refuse this generous offer?

King Ahab, unfortunately, did no completely understand what he was asking of Naboth. Here was a man who had been born on this vineyard. It was the land that his father had worked from daylight till dark, for many years. It was his last remaining link with his relatives and their memories, and the king wanted him to give it up; no! that was impossible.

Naboth answered to king Ahab: "The Lord forbid that I give up the inheritance of my fathers to you."

Ahab became more depressed after the rejection by Naboth to give him the vineyard, so he went inside his house, lay down on his bed, turned his face to the wall and refused to eat any food.

When Jezebel heard that her husband refused to eat any food, she became very concerned for him, going to see him in his private quarters. "Why does my Lord refuse to eat any food? What is it that causes trouble to your spirit?"

Ahab had an opportunity to tell his wife the complete truth. He had gone out to battle against the Syrian king and the Lord had delivered their complete army into his hands. He had taken the king of Syria prisoner, but then had let him go in peace. He then could have told Jezebel of the incident along the road. He had come upon the disguised prophet, who had asked him a riddle, and he had given his answer. This answer, the prophet revealed, was to be his downfall, and the downfall of all of Israel. This was the *real reason* his spirit was troubled.

Instead of telling the truth, he tells of the rejection by Naboth of his offer to buy his vineyard. Here was a king who was letting pride come in between himself and the truth, a very dangerous state of affairs in anyone's life. [Remember Numbers 32:23: "But if you not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord; and your sin will find you out."]

Upon hearing this, Jezebel began to chide her husband. "Don't you control and govern in Israel? Come on, get up, eat some food and celebrate your victory in battle. Come, let your heart become happy. I, queen Jezebel your wife, I shall give you what you desire. I shall give you the vineyard, that presently belongs to Naboth, the Jezreelite."

Once comforted by his wife, Ahab got up to eat his food, not in any way suspicious or questioning how his wife was to achieve this feat, a feat he had not been able to achieve.

In the meantime, Queen Jezebel issued letters to all the nobles and gentry, who lived with Naboth in the city. She issued these letters, in the name of the king, and sealed them with the king's seal.

The letters ordered the nobles to arrange a fast, to set Naboth in a position of authority, and to call the two sons of Belial, who are person of dubious character, to also be present at the fast.

During the fast, the two sons were to falsely accuse Naboth of renouncing God and cursing the king. After this accusation, the assembled gathering were to take Naboth outside the city gates and stone him to death.

Believing that the letters came from the king, the nobles called all the people to a special fast. They placed Naboth in a position of authority amongst them. During the fast, the two sons of Belial came into the gathering and sat down at the table opposite Naboth. A short time later, they both jumped up from the table with shouts of anger. "Naboth is a traitor. He just cursed our God and king. This is unforgivable. This is blasphemy. Take him outside the gates and stone him to death."

The people upon hearing this accusation, bundled up Naboth and quickly dragged him outside the gates of the city. At sundown, they performed the ceremonial stoning to death of anyone accused of blasphemy against God or king. They took up stones and threw them at Naboth until he was dead.

When this was completed, they sent messengers to Queen Jezebel informing her that the king's orders had been carried out - Naboth had been stoned outside the city, and he was now dead.

Queen Jezebel immediately went in to her husband, hoping to lift his low spirits him with the good news. "Arise now my Lord, arise and go and take possession of the vineyard which belonged to Naboth, for he is no longer with us. Naboth has been stoned to death for blasphemy."

When Ahab heard this, he was pleased in his heart. He immediately got up from his bed and went to take possession of the vineyard. He did not enquire how Naboth had died, or whether he had any relatives, who should receive the vineyard; his own greed was before his eyes - but the Lord God was not going to stand idly by and allow a king to go unpunished, for the murder of one of his own subjects, especially by a member of his own household.

And the Lord said to Elijah: "Get up from here and go and meet Ahab, the king of Israel, in the city of Samaria. He has gone to there take possession of the vineyard, which belongs to Naboth the Jezreelite. When you meet him say this to him: Thus says the Lord. Have you killed Naboth, and now are you going to take possession of his vineyard? I tell you, in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, after he was stoned to death, so shall the dogs lick your blood, even the blood of the king of Israel".

Ahab answered to Elijah: "I see that you have found me out. I see that you know of my sin." Elijah said to him; "Yes I have found you out, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord says to you: ***"I will bring evil down upon your house and sweep away all of your descendants in Israel. Every male descendant, whether slave, or freeman. I will make your household completely empty, like the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, son of Ahijah, two of your predecessors. I will do this for the sins you have performed, which have provoked Me to anger, and which has made the house of Israel to sin in my sight. As for Queen Jezebel, your wife; the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. The people who die in the city, the dogs shall eat; those that die in the fields outside the city, the birds shall rip to pieces and eat. For there has never been anyone before, who has sold himself to do evil, in the sight of the Lord, like you have, being led and deceived by your wife Jezebel. You have become an abomination in my sight, by going after and worshipping idols, just like the Amorites, whom I cast out when I gave this land to Israel for a possession."***

When Ahab heard this proclamation from Elijah, he was filled with remorse. He tore at his clothes until they were all on the ground. Instead of his rich royal robes he went about wearing sackcloth, he fasted regularly and slept in sackcloth, instead of the nice silk sheets of the royal bed chamber. Ahab pondered his past life and came to realise the terrible things he had done, both personally, and as the king of Israel. He prayed that the Lord would see the changed attitude of his heart and show mercy to him and his family. However, the Word of the Lord is unchanging, from eternity to eternity. What is pronounced as a commandment, by a Prophet of the Lord, must come to pass in its appointed time. But the Word also says that the Lord is a merciful and just God. The Lord did indeed see the change of heart of King Ahab, and so the Lord again talks to Elijah.

"Elijah! Do you see how Ahab now humbles himself before Me. Because he see the sin before his eyes and humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil upon his house in his own lifetime. I will wait until he has died and then I will destroy his dynasty, in the lifetime of his sons, will I destroy it.

So, for the time being, Ahab is not going to die. He is on a "good behaviour bond" with the Lord. Let us see how he uses it; does he use this "borrowed time" wisely, or does he continue on his evil ways.

The Syrian army went home in disarray, but that did not mean that the fighting stopped. Sporadic fighting continued between Syria and Israel for the next three years, with lives lost on both sides. Not only was the Syrians fighting against Israel, they were also fighting against the nation of Judah, under the kingship of Jehoshaphat.

At the end of the third year, Jehoshaphat came to visit Ahab in Samaria. During the discussions that took place, Ahab was reminded that the town of Ramoth, in the district of Gilead, belonged to Israel; but the Syrians have not returned this town its rightful owners.

Ahab said to Jehoshaphat: "Will you join with me and go the Ramoth-Gilead, to do battle and to restore this town to Israel?" Jehoshaphat answered saying: "I am as you are, my people are your people, my horses are your horses. But first I would advise that you call upon the Lord, to see if it is right for us to go up against Syria and to take back Ramoth-Gilead."

To humour Jehoshaphat, Ahab called all of his prophets together, about 400 of them and enquired of them. "Shall I go to battle against the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead, or should I hold back?"

The prophets gathered together and with one voice they answered the king: "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hands of the king."

Now Jehoshaphat had been sitting there listening to this discourse, but was not completely satisfied with its outcome, as he was a man who was more in tune with the Lord, than was Ahab. He was surprised that all of the prophets had given a unanimous answer: "That they should go up, for the Lord would deliver Ramoth-Gilead into the hands of the king." He was puzzled. Why did the prophets say: "Into the hands of the king". Should they not have said: " The Lord shall deliver them into the hands of King Ahab?" Thinking along these lines, Jehoshaphat asked to Ahab: "Is there not another prophet of the Lord which we can consult about this matter living here in Israel?"

Ahab answered in the following manner: "Yes there is yet one more man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, whom we may consult, to enquire of the Lord, but I hate this man; for he never prophesies any good for me, or for Israel."

Jehoshaphat was surprised by the anger of Ahab and that he said evil of God's anointed prophet.

Jehoshaphat counselled Ahab: "Ahab, I don't think you should speak evil of God's prophets; they only speak the messages that the Lord put into their mouths. Call this man I beg you, and see if he confirms the words of the other 400 prophets."

To maintain his good relations with Jehoshaphat, Ahab issued instructions for Micaiah to be brought before them. In the meanwhile, whilst Ahab and Jehoshaphat were each seated on their separate thrones on the threshing floor, at the gates of Samaria.

APPENDIX 3: THE NEW GENERATION OF PROPHETS

Up until this time we have clearly seen that God Almighty was holding the nation of Israel accountable collectively for its sins.

The king and his household were also held responsible for their sins (as the king was an anointed one of the Lord) and the nation was blessed or punished, depending on the leadership of the king in power at that particular time.

But God wanted now the prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. With almost no exceptions, the people had refused to listen and obey the prophets of old. In fact in the times when they did listen to them, it was usually to punish the prophets himself, not follow his words from the Lord. Following the previous methods was not seeming to get the Lord Almighty anywhere with His chosen people. A new approach therefore was necessary.

With the coming of John the Baptist, God Almighty commenced the transition of the role of the Prophets in His way of doing things.

APPENDIX 4: JOHN THE BAPTIST - THE GREATEST PROPHET

Many of you now reading this book maybe puzzled at the heading of this section, and the claim that John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets. These are not my words, they are the words of Jesus Christ Himself, when He was talking to His disciples.

Since the time of the Old Testament Prophets, God Almighty has been calling His people back to Himself, through the words, signs and deeds of His Prophets.

We know from the Scriptures that the people of Israel were a "stiff necked people". They did not want to continually follow the Words of the Lord.

Their attitude to the God who took them out of Egypt was one of an army general, their understanding of God Almighty (Yahweh), was of a person who must be obeyed at all times, or suffer the consequences.

This was only one side of the Faces of God Almighty. They did not understand and recognise that He has many other faces. This is why their sacrifices and worship was not acceptable to Him, in some cases, because of their inward sins of the heart, and their disobedience, as a nation to follow the words of the prophets.

John the Baptist came to the nation of Israel, with a new message. It focused on a new relationship with the God.

John started to teach the people around him that each individual was as precious to God as the whole nation of Israel. Each individuals sins were an abomination before the Lord, just as much as those of the nation of Israel as a whole.

It was preparing the Way for His coming onto the earth, in physical form, as Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ was asked by His disciples about John the Baptist, He answered with these words:

"What did you go out in the wilderness (desert) to see? A reed blowing in the wind? "What did you go out to see then? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in the house of kings. (Tell me) what did you (really) go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I tell you and one (out of the ordinary, an extra ordinary prophet) more eminent, more remarkable and superior to any other prophet before him.

This is one of whom it is written. Behold I send My messenger (Elias) on ahead of You, who shall make ready your Way before You. Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

We have learnt to weigh heavily on the Words of our Lord in the Scriptures. But sometimes we fail to understand (or miss) the significance of some of the words He spoke to His disciples, or to the crowds round about Him.

If I asked you, as an individual person, to identify the most important prophet of the Old Testament times, I am sure that I would receive many names of mighty prophets. They would probably include : Abraham, Moses, Noah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, David, just to name of few of them.

But I would be very surprised if anyone would offer up the name of John the Baptist, as the most important prophet of the Old Testament.

But indeed he is. Why do I say this? Because in the eyes of God, he was the most important, and Jesus Christ confirmed it in His own words.

If we look at the other prophets I have named, we can identify special things that they did, from the Scriptures under obedience to the Lord.

For instance **Abraham**, - he left his house freely under the commandment of the Lord, to go to a place that the Lord had chosen. His obedience was judged as righteousness.

Moses was chosen by God in the desert, to go back into Egypt, to free the Jewish people, at the end of the 400 years of slavery, as promised in the prophecy to Joseph.

Noah, cried out to God about the sin of the people and why God would not listen to him. God protected Noah for his righteousness sake and destroyed the whole of creation which was in sin and started afresh.

Elijah commanded the skies to cease sending rain and for three and a half years, there was no rain upon the earth.

Elisha prayed to the Lord to save the Shunamite woman's son and he was revived and went on living for many years.

David prayed for the salvation of the Jews and from his seed came the Branch. the root of Jesse, which was Jesus Christ the Lord.

So you say, we know all of these things. What is so special about them? Each one of these special stories have been recorded under the power of the Holy Spirit by the writers of the Scriptures, over many centuries.

But we don't have one record of any miracles, or predictions that John the Baptist made, which would make him more special, in the eyes of God, than all of the prophets mentioned above - or do we ?

If Jesus Christ considers he is very special, then we should examine his life, and his teachings very closely, because Jesus built upon them, as John came to prepare the way for Christ.

As a builder constructs a house upon solid foundations, so Jesus Christ presented His teachings upon the foundations prepared by John the Baptist. So what were these teachings and how have we missed them so easily in the past.

John the Baptist came to <u>change an individual's heart and attitude towards God.</u> Prior to this, the prophets had been directing their attention at <u>the "Nation of Israel" as a whole.</u> [If the nation turned away from its sinful nature, then God would bless the nation].

But now, John the Baptist was identifying sin, on a personal level. EACH PERSON WAS NOW ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR INDIVIDUAL SINS.

This was something new. More so was the teaching that each individual had to individually repent of their sins, and then - as proof of their repentance they were to bear fruit worthy of repentance. No longer was God Almighty a collective being, associated with the collective nation of Israel.

John the Baptist made people aware that they were individually accountable to God Almighty for their sins, and that they, as individuals, could be punished for them.

John brought people to a point where they were made consciously aware of their sins and the penalty for them being death. To overcome these sins was a problem for them, <u>as individuals, not as the collective unit of Israel.</u>

John proclaimed that all sinners must be baptised, Jew and Gentile alike. The use of water baptism was not something unfamiliar to the **Jews** of that day and age.

Whenever an **GENTILE** wanted to accept the Jewish faith and become a proselyte, they were required to go through the waters of baptism, to become "grafted into the nation of Israel".

But the startling thing that John was preaching was that every Jew who was a sinner, was now also required to be baptised, to allow them to again become acceptable to God.

John also prepared the people for the coming of the Messiah, through, Who, by grace, (by a free gift from God the Father), we may be saved, that is through His death on the cross, His victory over death, and His resurrection to everlasting life, as the first fruits of the resurrection.

John prophesied that he baptised with water, but that Jesus would <u>baptise with the HOLY SPIRIT & WITH FIRE.</u>

Now many books have been written about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and what an impact it has on the life of every Christian. But what about the BAPTISM OF FIRE ? WHAT IS IT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

If John was the greatest of all the prophets, and we have seen the evidence of people being baptised with the Holy Spirit, when can we expect the <u>BAPTISM OF FIRE TO COMMENCE ??</u>

Has it happened already ??? What will happen to those people who are effected by it?

When a storm is in the area where I live in Australia, it is quite common for lightning to strike a tree and set the surrounding bush on fire. The fire races through the forest, burning everything in its path, without fear or favour, everything gets burned.

Shortly after, maybe one or two weeks later, the forest will start to sprout new growth from among the tree which had previously been consumed in the fire. BUT NOT ALL THE TREES WILL START TO BLOOM AGAIN. SOME WILL BE DEAD FOR EVER.

When you go into a jeweller's shop he has a small fire in which he melts the copper, the tin and mixes them together to make a new metal - (Brass). He also uses fire to purify the silver and gold, to take all the impurities out of it. Only when the impurities are removed can he then start to make the wonderful pieces of jewellery worn by many women today.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE, THAT JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS TALKING ABOUT IS THE SAME IN FUNCTION.

As the Holy Spirit has come and has spread across the world, causing revival in old churches, creation of and salvation in new churches, making the people take the church, out of its ivory towers, and into the streets, just like in the first century churches, so a major change is about to occur, when the BAPTISM OF FIRE COMES.

It is the responsibility of pastors around the world today, to identify what the BAPTISM OF FIRE is, what is its function and to start to prepare the church for its coming.

Jesus did not send the Holy Spirit to the disciples un-announced. He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem, until the "promise from the Father shall arrive". Because of their obedience to His words, the Holy Spirit came down upon them.

The BAPTISM OF FIRE will come. It may come like the bolt of lightning, or it might come in some other way, that is not clear to me. But in faith I know that God will honour His word and send the fire down upon us.

The fire shall consume both the believer and non-believer alike. Everyone in its path shall be affected.

For the believer, it shall be a refining fire, a cleansing of all sins, those special sins which have been secretly hidden away from the eyes of the family, the eyes of the other church members, but not hidden away from the eyes of the Lord.

The fire of the Lord could also be a series of testings and trials, to put your faith to the test, to make you rely completely upon the Lord, instead of upon your pastor, your financial stability, your family or your intellectual abilities.

This shall be necessary, so that the Lord can start and finish the task of preparing His bride for the wedding feast. Hebrews 6:1-3 says that we should press on to the finish, to become like Christ, but only if God shall permit.

Like the trees after the fire, new shoots spring forth from among the ashes, so shall the individual Christians spring forth with new levels of faith. This revelation which John the Baptist received from the Lord, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was the reason the he was proclaimed by Jesus Christ to be the greatest of all the Prophets. But you look at this and say :- "What relevance is this to us today, living in the latter half of the twentieth century, nearly 2,000 years after the birth of Jesus Christ?

APPENDIX 5: THE MODERN DAY PROPHET

As we have seen in the past, the prophet has always been "the mouthpiece of God Almighty", a vessel used by God to proclaim His anger or blessings upon His chosen peoples. The people chosen by God to perform these special missions were often persecuted, imprisoned, or even killed, by the very people they were sent to speak to by God Almighty.

These people were considered radicals by the majority of the people, who only listened to them out of fear what might happen to them if they disobeyed the will of God for most of their lifetime.

God has not changed His ways - He still uses His prophets to perform function today - even in this day and age. But unfortunately for the world at large, the majority of peoples and nations refuse to acknowledge their existence in the world today. This situation is due to the fact that "most Churches" around the world today refuse to acknowledge the existence of Prophets in the Body of Christ in the twentieth century.

If they did acknowledge this fact, they would also have to recognise the existence of the "five-fold apostolic ministries", as laid down in the Scriptures. To many churches, this goes against their **"man-made church professions, power bases and pyramid hierarchies."**

For several centuries now the churches have decided to appoint their own leaders and as such have changed the concept of the church, away from that laid down in the Scriptures, which is the sovereign Word of God. The result is that the "traditional churches" are progressively dying, as more and more of the younger generation see the contradiction in the way the church is governed, compared to what is written in the Word of God.

The Scripture is very clear in this regard (refer to Ephesians 4:11) "And His gifts were varied; He Himself appointed and gave men to us, some to be APOSTLES (special messengers from God), some PROPHETS (inspired preachers and expounders of the Word of God, some EVANGELISTS (preachers of the Gospel, travelling missionaries), some PASTORS (shepherds -caretakers of His flock) and TEACHERS (those people, gifted by God, to clearly explain God's Word - in simple terms, to the Body of Christ), His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people) that they should do the work of ministering towards building up Christ's Body - which is the church. That it may develop until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God; that we might arrive at really mature (spiritual) manhood - the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection - the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found (only) in Him."

Now I am very sure that no pastor of a present day church will come forward and publicly say that "his church" is perfect and has attained that "oneness of the faith" which brings us to the perfect spiritual level - to the complete perfection which is Jesus Christ. This means that nothing has changed.

The synagogues of ancient times were a closed shop affair. If you were not a direct descendant of Aaron - the hight priest, a levite, you were not entitled to become a priest of the nation of Israel and minister in the Temple.

Nowadays many denominations will not allow persons to preach in their churches , unless they have gone to their own particular bible seminaries and these persons are then sent out to be a pastor in one of their own churches. The churches of the twentieth century have become like elite, selective social clubs. Very few of them are like the churches of the first century, proudly proclaiming and practising 100 percent the written Word of God. The "church hierarchies" have allowed the Word of God to become "watered down" in its interpretation and in the ways we live our lives.

Governments have legislated to remove any derogatory references to homosexual behaviour, as a criminal offence.

Churches have not taken on their responsibilities to ensure that these legislations do not become the law of the land. Churches have allowed people who still perform these acts, to be members of the governing body of their individual churches, even though the Word of God says that these acts are an abomination in the sight of God Almighty.

This is just one example of why the Body of Christ is not a perfect, united, Body. If you are a member of an individual church you will know of many other reasons why your individual church does not agree with the doctrines of "that other church - just up the road".

But this is not the way the Lord wanted it to be !!!! The Scripture clearly says that we are to become ***ONE - UNITED IN THE BODY OF CHRIST*** - not at war with each part of the Body of Christ. **We are supposed to all be united and at war with one enemy only - SATAN.**

For this reason, the Lord raised up the "five-fold ministries". Persons who are selected by the Lord Himself - not by man. Persons who operate under the anointing and the Power of the Holy Spirit, to be a witness to the whole Body of Christ. These people do not belong to any special denomination, they preach Christ, without reference to individual denominations. This is just like the first generation churches.

If you disagree with my analysis, I would like to ask you a simple question : What denomination did Jesus belong to ?

It is now in the latter half of the twentieth century, that the greatest spiritual battles are being fought in the spiritual realm, for the millions of souls snatched away by satan and his helpers. This is a battle that we were

commanded to fight and to win, if we wanted to be found acceptable to belong to the Bride of Christ, in the end time judgement.

We, as individual Christians, have to become more and more aware of what the Bible really says, not rely on other people's ideas. We have to cry out to the Lord to send the people mentioned in the Word, those people especially selected by the Lord Himself, to be a blessing and a guide to the Body of Christ, as a whole, so that we can move into the twenty first century with the certainty that our names still remain in the Lamb's Book of life.

For these things to come to pass, we must recognise that it can only happen if the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Teachers and Pastors, called by God Almighty Himself, are allowed to function in the collective Body of Christ, operating with all the nine manifested Gifts of the Holy Spirit, to sift and shake the Body of Christ, so that what remains shall become stronger in the faith, more determined to serve the Lord and eve prepared to go and do whatever the Lord calls of them - without fear or favour.

So if someone gets up in your church and challenges you with a Word from the Lord, don't close your ears to him/her. Carefully listen to what the person has to say and test it against the Word of God. If it agrees with the Word of God and it is to **"EDIFY, EXHORT, or COMFORT"** the Body of Christ, then you are obliged to accept it and put it into practise in your lives. If it does not line up with the Word of God, **IGNORE IT COMPLETELY !!!**

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Lord never changes. His Word is the truth, is the truth, is the truth - forever. The words of this book are to challenge you to look carefully at yourself, your attitude to God Almighty, your attitude to Jesus Christ, and your attitude to your fellow believers throughout the world in which we live together.

I hope and pray that after reading this book you will be challenged by it enough to pass it on to someone else, so that the Challenge of the Word of the Lord shall not be left to sit on the bookshelf forever.

DETAILS ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND NEW LIGHT MINISTRIES & CONSULTING SERVICES PTY. LTD [NLMCS]

NLMCS was formed initially in Thailand by Rani and Jeff Camm, to promote the Word of God through the free distribution of books, music and video tapes, all of which have a Christian message. Jeff Camm was ordained as a Pastor of the United PRESBYTERIAN Church of Pakistan, in 1981 and has been led by the Lord to preach and teach, wherever invited, as a self-support evangelist and teacher. The income to run the NLMCS organization comes partly from his own salary, as a consultant engineer, and from love gift offerings from Christians around the world, who have been led by the Lord to support this ministry in a financial way.

If you have found this series of lessons of value, please write to us and give us your name and address, so that we can advise you of future publications by NLMCS as they become available.

REMEMBER: ALL OUR PUBLICATIONS ARE FREE !!!

For those readers who are not familiar with Rev. Camm's previous writings, the following is a list of books presently under publication through NLMCS and available from the addresses shown below.

The Gifts, Administrations and Offices of the Holy Spirit.

(Available in English and Thai translations.)

This is a book which examines the role and the effects of the Holy Spirit in the Church, as related in the Old Testament, in the life of Jesus Christ, in the life of the early church, and the life of the churches today.

In Search of the Truth.

(Available in English)

This book challenges people to examine their own specific religions and look for the real truth. It examines the Christian and Jewish faiths, Islam and Buddhism and clearly indicates where each shows the way to the truth, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and how we should follow Him. The book identifies from the Koran the passages where Muslims are told to **"obey God and follow Jesus"** and is a must for all Christians who wish to have accurate knowledge enabling them to evangelise and witness to Muslims.

Prophetic Ministry
Course Code: CTTNBC - 003
Total hours: 20 hours

On the Potters Wheel

(Available in English)

Before each individual person accepted Jesus Christ into their lives, satan was the potter, who shaped their being and was responsible for a lot of their actions. After salvation, the old mould had to be broken and a new being created, with Jesus Christ as the potter.

This book takes up this theme, in the life of the author himself, and how the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ into his life had a dramatic effect on the work and future responsibilities he would have to encounter.

Out of Darkness

(In English and Thai translation, and soon in German)

The book is a collection of sermons and teachings given by Rev. J. D. Camm, an ordained minister, evangelist and engineer, who preaches and teaches in many countries to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. It is our hope that in reading these sermons and teaching notes you will feel the need to go back and check the Scriptures for yourselves, to verify that what is said, does indeed come from the Bible.

It is, of course, then necessary for each individual reader, upon finding that in fact the statements are true, to decide if they are strong enough as Christians, to put these truths into practice in their own individual lives.

OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

If you would like to visit your church, to hold revival meetings, to conduct teaching sessions, or just to share in fellowship, please have your Pastor send or fax us a written invitation. This will help with visa formalities in some countries. We will endeavour to meet each request, as the Lord leads us. If the Lord moves you to give a love gift for the continuation of His work, through this type of publication, our mailing addresses are listed below :-

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For a full list of teaching materials, books and Bible College Course, please checkout out the links below.

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Prophetic Ministry
Course Code: CTTNBC - 003
Total hours: 20 hours

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